



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

December 12, 2025

ACQUISITION ALERT 2026-11

TO: Heads of Contracting Activities

FROM: Christopher J. Rosier **CHRISTOPHER ROSIER** Digitally signed by CHRISTOPHER ROSIER
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Date: 2025.12.12 12:10:22 -05'00'

SUBJECT: FAR Class Deviation for FAR Part 15 in Support of Executive Order 14275, Restoring Common Sense to Federal Procurement.

- 1. Purpose.** This Acquisition Alert (AA) adopts a class deviation to Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 15 for purposes of implementing the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council's (the Council's) model deviation text to FAR Part 15.
- 2. Background.** On April 15, 2025, the Executive Order (E.O.) 14275 on Restoring Common Sense to Federal Procurement was signed. Section 2 of the E.O. establishes the policy that the FAR "should only contain provisions required by statute or essential to sound procurement, and any FAR provisions that do not advance these objectives should be removed." On May 31, 2025, the enclosed class deviation was issued for the use of all Revolutionary FAR Overhaul (RFO) model deviation texts and corresponding EDAR deviations.
- 3. Summary of Changes.** Besides a major restructuring, there have been significant changes to FAR 15, Contracting by Negotiation, to address long-term pain points for Government and Industry.

Key new improvements and flexibilities to part 15 include:

- **Logical Flow:** The new framework replaces a topic-based structure with a more intuitive flow based on the acquisition lifecycle.
- **Consolidation:** Concepts that were previously fragmented are now unified creating a more cohesive framework.
- **Core Vocabulary Changes:** Key terms are defined and standardized.
 - The term "discussions" is replaced with "negotiations." The term "communications," in the context of competitive range establishment, has been eliminated. The term "deficiency" is redefined.
 - The use of "clarifications" now includes robust guidelines for its application. Clarifications permit minor corrections but do not allow

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for proposal revision and cannot be used to cure proposal deficiencies or material omissions. The scope of permissible clarifications was expanded to include coverage that was previously limited to “communications” before establishing the competitive range. Clarifications may be conducted at any time after receipt of proposals through contract award irrespective of whether a competitive range has been established.

- **Updated Rules of Engagement:** Contracting officers must negotiate with each responsible offeror within the competitive range and may further negotiate with the offerors as needed. Having further negotiations with one offeror does not require the contracting officer to have further negotiations with other offerors. The deviation text provides guidance on industry communication through early exchanges and debriefing.
- **Redefined Competitive Range:** The competitive range is now clearly defined as “the group of evaluated proposals that the contracting officer determines are best suited for further negotiation” instead of “all of the most highly rated proposals”.
- **Enhanced Clarity:** The text has been revised for greater clarity. It employs more direct language and introduces explicit subheadings for complex topics.

Statutory requirements retained in the RFO FAR Part 15 model deviation include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- 6 U.S.C. § 394, Unsolicited Proposals
- 10 U.S.C. § 3206 and 41 U.S.C. § 3306(c), Evaluation Factors
- 10 U.S.C. §§ 3301 et seq and 41 U.S.C. §§ 3701 et seq, Awarding of Contracts
- 10 U.S.C. §§ 3701 et seq and 41 U.S.C. §§ 3501 et seq, Truth in Negotiations Act
- 41 U.S.C. § 2102, Prohibitions on Disclosing and Obtaining Procurement Information

Change	Description
Retained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 15 continues to be the part primarily used for establishing negotiated contracts when using a request for proposal (RFP). • The following provision and clauses are retained (or remain reserved) with no changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 52.215-4 remains reserved ○ 52.215-7 remains reserved

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 52.215-9 (Clause), Changes or Additions to Make-or-Buy Program ○ 52.215-10 (Clause), Price Reduction for Defective Certified Cost or Pricing Data ○ 52.215-14 (Clause), Integrity of Unit Prices ○ 52.215-16 (Provision), Facilities Capital Cost of Money ○ 52.215-17 (Clause), Waiver of Facilities Capital Cost of Money ○ 52.215-24 thru 52.215-42 remain reserved
Moved / Updated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The part structure is revised from six subparts to five: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subpart 15.1 - Presolicitation and Solicitation ○ Subpart 15.2 - Evaluation and Award ○ Subpart 15.3 – Postaward ○ Subpart 15.4 - Contract Pricing ○ Subpart 15.5 - Unsolicited Proposals • 15.000, “Scope”, is updated to emphasize that the procedures in the part provide an opportunity for back-and-forth negotiation between the Government and an offeror(s) upon receipt of a proposal submitted in response to an RFP. • 15.001, “Definitions”, updates two of the four definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Deficiency” is updated to remove reference to “unacceptable risk” and clearly define a “material requirement”. ○ “Proposal revision” is updated to include the phrase “material elements of a proposal”. This revision clarifies that not every change made during negotiations constitutes a proposal revision, focusing the definition on changes that are substantive in nature. • 15.002, “Types of Negotiated Acquisitions”, is updated to modernize the language throughout. The two paragraphs in this section are now titled “Noncompetitive Acquisitions” and “Competitive Acquisitions”. • 15.101, “Early Exchanges with Industry”, revises and consolidates content previously located in multiple sections of the part. The new section is structured with clear subheadings for “Draft RFPs”, “Requests for Information”, “Mission Needs and Requirements”, and “Advisory Multistep Process”, making the content more accessible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15.102, “Structuring a request for proposals”, more clearly outlines the required format and content for RFPs. • 15.103, “Developing a Competitive Source Selection Approach”, relocates the existing source selection approaches (“Tradeoff” and “Lowest Price Technically Acceptable”) and adds two approaches - “Highest Technically Rated with a Fair and Reasonable Price” (15.103-3) and “Phased Acquisitions” (15.103-4). • 15.105, “Other Considerations”, relocates, consolidates, and updates topics previously located throughout the part into a single section. This consolidation enhances the usability of the regulation by grouping these specific solicitation-related considerations together for easy reference during RFP preparation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 15.105-1 Oral presentations. Relocated from 15.102. ○ 15.105-2 Negotiations disclosure. Relocated from 15.209(a). ○ 15.105-3 Limitation on tiered evaluations for multiple award contracts. Relocated from 15.101-3. ○ 15.105-4 Request for cost or pricing data. Relocated from 15.403-5. ○ 15.105-5 Make-or-buy decision. Relocated from 15.407-2. ○ 15.105-6 Should-cost review. Relocated from 15.407-4. ○ 15.105-7 Unit prices. Relocated from 15.404-1(f). • 15.106, “Amending a Request for Proposal”, updates former section 15.206. The language and requirements are now clearer. • 15.109, “Uniform Contract Format”, and its subsections, are relocated and streamlined. • New subpart 15.2, “Evaluation and Award”, updates and clarifies the evaluation and award process. • 15.202, “Evaluating Competitive Proposals”, relocates and substantially revises the content previously at section 15.305. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 15.202(a)(2) provides a more robust, multi-part definition of “clarifications”. It states that clarifications can be used to “enhance the Government’s understanding of a proposal”, “allow reasonable interpretation”, and address
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	<p>“ambiguities” as well as “perceived deficiencies, weaknesses, errors, omissions, or mistakes”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The new definition allows the contracting officer to request additional information or documentation provided cost/price or other material elements of the proposal are unchanged. ○ Clarifications are not to be used for revising proposals and curing deficiencies or material omissions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15.204, “Competitive Award with Negotiation”, streamlines and consolidates the complex rules for post-evaluation exchanges with offerors, which were previously spread across sections 15.306 (“Exchanges with offerors after receipt of proposals”) and 15.307 (“Proposal revisions”). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The phrase, “communications with offerors before establishment of the competitive range” has been deleted, and where appropriate, functions have been moved to the new definition of “clarifications” under 15.202(a)(2). ● 15.206, “Preaward notices and debriefings”, updates guidance on preaward notices and debriefings. ● New 15.207-1, provides new information about completing the award document when not using OF 307, Contract Award; SF 26, Award/Contract; or SF 33, Solicitation, Offer and Award. ● 15.301, “Postaward Debriefing of Offerors”, relocates and updates the content on post-award debriefings, previously at 15.506. ● Subpart 15.4, “Contract Pricing”, has been restructured and the internal section numbering and organization have been significantly updated. ● Subpart 15.5, “Unsolicited Proposals”, is moved from former subpart 15.6 and the content is reorganized and streamlined. ● The following provisions and clauses are updated for clarity, to mirror updates made throughout the part, and/or to update cross-references or remove outdated content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 52.215-1 (Provision), Instructions to Offerors—Competitive Acquisition ○ 52.215-2 (Clause), Audit and Records—Negotiation
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alternate I is removed because it implemented the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which is no longer active. ○ 52.215-6 (Provision), Place of Performance ○ 52.215-8 (Clause), Order of Precedence—Uniform Contract Format ○ 52.215-11 (Clause), Price Reduction for Defective Certified Cost or Pricing Data—Modifications ○ 52.215-12 (Clause), Subcontractor Certified Cost or Pricing Data ○ 52.215-13 (Clause), Subcontractor Certified Cost or Pricing Data—Modifications ○ 52.215-15 (Clause), Pension adjustments and asset reversions ○ 52.215-18 (Clause), Reversion or Adjustment of Plans for Postretirement Benefits (PRB) Other Than Pensions ○ 52.215-19 (Clause), Notification of Ownership Changes ○ 52.215-20 (Provision), Requirements for Certified Cost or Pricing Data and Data Other Than Certified Cost or Pricing Data ○ 52.215-21 (Clause), Requirements for Certified Cost or Pricing Data and Data Other Than Certified Cost or Pricing Data—Modifications ○ 52.215-22 (Provision), Limitations on Pass-Through Charges—Identification of Subcontract Effort ○ 52.215-23 (Clause), Limitations on Pass-Through Charges • The FAR Companion is expected to include best practice information not required in the FAR on the following content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guidance on the best value continuum and using various source selection approaches ○ Procedures pertaining to oral presentations ○ Amendments based on alternate solutions
Removed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former section 15.205, “Issuing Solicitations”, is removed because it is repetitive of information found in other FAR parts. • The following provisions are deleted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 52.215-3 (Provision), Request for Information or

	<p>Solicitation for Planning Purposes, is now reserved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information is covered by the new 15.101(c). ○ 52.215-5 (Provision), Facsimile Proposals, is now reserved. The revised regulation takes a more technology-neutral approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This allows agencies the flexibility to authorize a range of modern electronic submission methods without needing a specific, and now largely outdated, provision.
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This table is not an exhaustive list.

4. Instructions.

- The Department of Education’s acquisition workforce shall follow the RFO Part 15 instead of FAR Part 15 as codified at 48 CFR Chapter 1. The Council’s RFO Part 15 model deviation text is available at <https://www.acquisition.gov/far-overhaul/far-part-deviation-guide/far-overhaul-part-15> and is incorporated into this class deviation. A separate Acquisition Alert will be issued for any corresponding changes to EDAR part 3415.
- For new solicitations or contracts, when using any provisions or clauses that have been revised, utilize the RFO model deviation language at <https://www.acquisition.gov/far-overhaul/far-part-deviation-guide/far-overhaul-part-52>.
- For open solicitations or awarded contracts, the contracting officer has discretion regarding the need to enforce or amend the provisions or clauses. Note that without some of the removed provisions or clauses, the contracting officer may be required to separately address certain aspects in the contract.
- Review templates and related standard operating procedures to align with this deviation and remove unnecessary processes and steps.

5. Training. Acquisition Professionals are highly encouraged to complete “Practitioner Album: FAR Part 15 – Contracting by Negotiation” at https://www.acquisition.gov/sites/default/files/practitioner_albums/far-part-15-contracting-by-negotiation/content/index.html within 30 days. Please complete the Practitioner Album and mark “yes” under the completion attestation within FAI CSOD.

6. Effective Date. This class deviation to FAR Part 15 is effective January 30, 2026, and remains in effect until rescinded or incorporated into the FAR.

7. **Points of Contact.** Direct questions regarding this class deviation to your respective policy points of contact.
8. **Enclosure.** Determination and Findings - Class Deviation for the Revolutionary FAR Overhaul

DETERMINATION AND FINDINGS
Department of Education, All Contracting Activities
Class Deviation for the Revolutionary FAR Overhaul

This approves a class deviation to all Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and Department of Education Acquisition Regulation (EDAR) parts for purposes of implementing the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council's (the Council's) model deviation text.

Findings

On April 15, 2025, the Executive Order (E.O.) 14275 on Restoring Common Sense to Federal Procurement was signed. Section 2 of the E.O. establishes the policy that the FAR "should only contain provisions required by statute or essential to sound procurement, and any FAR provisions that do not advance these objectives should be removed."

The FAR is being updated to:

- Remove language that is not required by statute
- Remove duplicative or outdated language
- Clarify or provide more plain language
- Revise language for the new FAR framework
- Retain language necessary for governmentwide acquisition standards

This project is referred to as the Revolutionary FAR Overhaul (RFO) initiative.

In explaining the Federal Acquisition System, the RFO FAR Part deviation text establishes bedrock principles. Most centrally, it sets a "mission first" message at the top of the guiding principles. The RFO model deviation also increases the emphasis on the best use of taxpayer dollars and calls out the value of time as another guiding principle. Additionally, it retains a focus on satisfying the customer, maximizing use of commercial products and services, promoting competition, and encouraging innovation.

The FAR Council Deviation guidance allows for agencies to deviate agency acquisition regulation supplements as it relates to the RFO.

Determination

In accordance with FAR 1.404 and EDAR 3401.404, I hereby issue a class deviation for the use of all RFO model deviation texts and corresponding EDAR deviations. The adoption date for each RFO part model deviation text will be the date of the corresponding Acquisition Alert. EDAR deviation texts may be issued in a separate Acquisition Alert. All Department of Education contracting activities must follow the RFO model deviation texts instead of the FAR Parts codified at 48 CFR. Should the language of the RFO FAR contradict any statutorily granted procurement authorities to the Department of Education including the Office of Federal Student Aid, the statutorily granted authorities prevail.

In the unlikely event that the Department wishes to vary from a RFO model deviation text, a separate deviation will be issued. This class deviation will remain in effect until incorporated into the FAR, EDAR or rescinded.

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Date

Acting Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO)