



# FEDTEX

*Individual and Unit Tactical Gear, Uniforms and Personal Protective Equipment*

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May 19-20, 2026    Raleigh, North Carolina

Hosted By  
US Senator Thom Tillis  
US Senator Ted Budd  
North Carolina Military Business Center



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## **Mastering Proposal Writing for Department of Defense Contracts in Textiles**

- Reena Bhatia, Regional Program Manager (Raleigh), NC Military Business Center

# Mastering Proposal Writing for DoD Textile Contracts

Presented By: Reena Bhatia

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# Mastering Proposal Writing for DoD Textile Contracts

## Today's Agenda

- Opening: Why Most Proposals Lose Before They're Written
- Know What You're Bidding Into: DoD Textile Landscape
- Dissecting the Solicitation
- Sample Requirements - The Hidden Trip Wire
- Go / No-Go: Discipline Before You Write a Word
- Writing the Technical Volume
- Past Performance & Pricing
- Certifications - The Silent Disqualifiers
- After Submission + Resources & Q&A



# Opening: Why Proposals Lose

## The Hard Truth

- Most DoD textile proposals don't lose on price or product quality
- They lose on paper because of how they proposals are written

## The Gap

- Being able to make a great product is not the same as proving it on paper
- Government evaluators can only score what's in the proposal
- Your manufacturing capability, your quality, your supply chain - none of it counts **if** it's not documented

## What We Cover Today

- A product-specific, practical roadmap for writing stronger DoD textile proposals
- Real solicitation examples - from patches to boots to uniform fabric
- The specific mistakes that knock manufacturers out and how to avoid them



# Know What You're Bidding Into

## DoD Textile Landscape

### DoD Textile Product Categories (examples only)

- **Soft goods:** Patches, insignia, uniform fabric, flags, ribbons
- **Footwear:** Combat boots, cold weather, hot weather, safety
- **Technical textiles:** Body armor carriers, load-bearing gear, shelters
- **Non-wovens:** Filtration, wound care, vehicle interiors, PPE

### Key Buyers

- DLA Troop Support (C&T) — Philadelphia, PA
- PEO Soldier — Fort Belvoir, VA
- NAVSUP — Mechanicsburg, PA
- USMC Systems Command — Quantico, VA

## Key Buyers & Requirements

### Contract Vehicles

- DLA DIBBS — open-market RFQs and IFBs
- Long-term IDIQs — 3 to 5 year ordering periods
- Sole-source — QPL-listed suppliers only
- AbilityOne / NIB-NISH — designated items

### Key Compliance Requirements

- **Berry Amendment:** All C&T items must be 100% U.S. grown, processed, and manufactured
- **Kissell Amendment:** Extends Berry to hand or measuring tools acquired by DHS
- **DFARS 252.225-7012:** The specific contract clause — know it, cite it, comply with it

### The Opportunity

- DLA Troop Support manages \$13.4B+ in clothing and textile supply annually
- 85% of DLA solicitations flow through DIBBS

# Dissecting the Solicitation

## Read the Right Sections First

- **Sections L & M:** Your scoring rubric. Read these before the Statement of Work.
- **Section C (PWS/SOW/SOO):** What you must deliver. Every requirement must be addressed.
- **Section E:** Inspection & acceptance criteria — how they'll judge your product.

## Know Your Spec Type

- **MIL-DTL / MIL-SPEC:** Prescriptive. Every detail is specified. No room for deviation without approval.
- **Commercial Item Description (CID):** Performance-based. More flexibility on how, less on what.
- **QPL/QML Required:** You must already be listed — or factor qualification time into your bid decision.

## Reading Between the Lines

- Look up the incumbent on FPDS — understand what you're up against
- Short response windows and very specific specs can signal a directed acquisition
- LPTA vs. Best Value tells you exactly how to price and write your technical volume



# Sample Requirements

## The Hidden Trip Wire

### Three Types of Sample Requirements — All Have Teeth

- **1. Pre-Award Samples (with your proposal):** DLAD Procurement Notes (April 2025): DLA can request physical product samples within 10 days of request, at no cost to the government. If you cannot produce conforming product for evaluation, your offer is eliminated.
- **2. First Article Testing (FAT) — Post-Award, Pre-Production:** Real examples from recent solicitations:
  - Extreme Cold Weather Boots (SPE1C1-25-R-ECWBINSU, June 2025): Physical boot samples (PDMs) are a formal Best Value evaluation factor — submitted with the proposal
  - Service Ribbons / Insignia (SPE1C125RX005, March 2025): FAT due within 30 days of award; first delivery 120 days post-award
  - Marine Corps Dark Blue Cloth (SPE1C1-24-R-0017, Nov 2024): FAT + Berry Amendment documentation + RFID tagging compliance
  - Self-Inflating Sleeping Mats (DLA DIBBS, May 2024): FAT due 45 days after award; government has 35 days to review
  - Uniform Fabric (NAICS 313310): FAT due 120 days after award; delivery begins 210 days post-award



# Sample Requirements The Hidden Trip Wire

## Three Types of Sample Requirements — All Have Teeth

**3. Production Lot Sampling — Ongoing:** DLA's Quality Assurance requirements mandate random sampling by a QAS at finishing plants throughout the contract. DLA Product Test Center has 45 days to return results. Each lot can be rejected.

### The FAT Trap (Presenter Observation)

- Manufacturers win the bid, then FAT eats into the delivery schedule — and they miss the first delivery milestone. Plan your FAT timeline before you submit your proposal, not after you win.



# Go / No-Go: Discipline Before You Write

## Ask These Questions Before You Write a Single Word

- **Can you meet the spec and prove it?** Test data, certifications, and QPL listings must be in hand — not in progress.
- **Can you handle First Article timing?** FAT deadlines start the day of award. If your product isn't ready to test, you're already late.
- **Can you meet delivery AND surge?** DLA contracts often include surge provisions. What's your max monthly capacity?
- **Is your supply chain Berry Amendment compliant?** 100% domestic fiber, yarn, fabric, and assembly — or you can't bid.
- **Do you know who the incumbent is?** Look them up. Know their pricing, their past performance score, their weaknesses.



# Go / No-Go: Discipline Before You Write

## Research Tools Every Bidder Should Use

- SAM.gov — active solicitations, entity registration, past performance
- DLA DIBBS (dibbs.bsm.dla.mil) — DLA-specific solicitations and awards
- FPDS.gov — historical awards, incumbent pricing, award patterns
- USASpending.gov — agency spend trends by product and NAICS code



# Writing the Technical Volume

## Where Proposals Are Won

### Start Here Every Time

- **Build a compliance matrix:**  
Column 1 = PWS/SOW requirement.  
Column 2 = where you address it. If it's not in the matrix, it's not in your proposal.
- **Mirror government language:** Use the exact terms from the solicitation — evaluators are checking boxes.

## Common Mistakes & Evaluator Priorities

### Common Technical Volume Mistakes

- No compliance matrix — evaluator can't find your responses
- Vague manufacturing claims — 'we have the capability' means nothing
- Ignoring quality assurance requirements in the PWS
- Failing to address every line item in the spec
- Using generic boilerplate that could apply to any contract

# Writing the Technical Volume

## Where Proposals Are Won

### Translating Textiles Into Outcomes

- Don't just list specs — connect them to performance
- Weak: "7 oz. Nomex IIIA fabric per MIL-DTL-32439"
- Strong: "7 oz. Nomex IIIA fabric provides flame resistance without melt/drip failure, protecting the warfighter in sustained thermal exposure environments"

## Common Mistakes & Evaluator Priorities

### What Evaluators Want to See

- Specific test methods referenced (Fed. Std. 191A, ASTM D series)
- Named testing labs and certifications
- Quantified capacity: pairs per week, yards per month
- Photos and diagrams where page limits allow
- A clear First Article Testing plan with timeline

# Writing the Technical Volume

## Where Proposals Are Won

### Prove Manufacturing Capability

- Document production capacity and max monthly output
- Name your domestic supply chain - mills, finishers, cut-and-sew
- Reference your quality system and testing protocols by name

## Common Mistakes & Evaluator Priorities

### Page Limits Are Real

- Every word must earn its place — be specific, not verbose
- Tables and charts communicate more than paragraphs

# Past Performance & Pricing

## Past Performance: Your Most Underused Asset

- **Relevance matters:** Size, scope, complexity, and customer type. "We made 50,000 yards for a commercial apparel brand" needs to be translated into government terms.
- **Limited federal past performance?** Lead with your strongest commercial work, quantify scale, and close the gap with a teaming partner who has federal experience.
- **CPARS follows you:** Every DoD award is scored. Ratings of Satisfactory or above are expected. Marginal ratings require an explanation strategy.



# Past Performance & Pricing

## Pricing: The Tightrope Walk

- **Build a solid BOM:** Material costs, labor, testing, FAT, packaging, and profit — document every element.
- **Material volatility is real:** Yarn, fiber, coatings, hardware prices fluctuate. Include an Economic Price Adjustment clause if the solicitation allows it.
- **LPTA vs. Best Value:** Under LPTA, lowest technically acceptable price wins. Under Best Value, a stronger technical proposal can justify a higher price.
- **The buy-in trap:** Pricing below cost to get a foothold almost always backfires. You will be held to every delivery milestone regardless of margin.



# Certifications — The Silent Disqualifiers

## If These Aren't in Place, You Can't Compete

- **SAM.gov Registration:** Still the #1 reason small manufacturers get eliminated. Must be active and current - check your expiration date today.
- **QPL / QML Listing:** Required for many MIL-SPEC textile items. Qualification can take 6-18 months. Factor this into your bid pipeline planning.
- **Berry Amendment Documentation:** Contracting officers want to see the full domestic supply chain — fiber, yarn, fabric, and assembly all documented. 'We're domestic' is not enough.
- **First Article Testing (FAT):** Budget for it in time AND money. FAT is a contract requirement, not optional. Failing FAT after award is a serious performance risk.
- **Quality Systems:** ISO 9001 is the baseline expectation. Some programs require AS9100 or MIL-I-45208. Know what your target contract requires.
- **ITAR / EAR:** Relevant for technical textiles used in sensitive applications. If your product touches a controlled application, understand your obligations.

## Pro Tip

- Build a certifications tracker - know every expiration date across your team, your suppliers, and your teaming partners



# After Submission & Key Resources

## After You Submit

- **Evaluation timeline:** DLA textile awards typically take 60-180 days. Follow up only through official channels.
- **Debriefs are your right:** Request one within 3 days of notice of award (FAR 15.505/15.506). Ask what scored well and what didn't — this is your free coaching session.
- **Protests:** Know the threshold. GAO protests must be filed within 10 days of the debrief. Use sparingly and strategically.
- **Continuous improvement:** Every bid cycle should make the next proposal better. Maintain a lessons-learned file.





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