

Social Security Administration

§ 435.43

(B) A Federal agency publicly and officially cites the research findings in support of an agency action that has the force and effect of law.

(iii) *Used by the Federal Government in developing an agency action that has the force and effect of law* is defined as when an agency publicly and officially cites the research findings in support of an agency action that has the force and effect of law.

(e) *Title to intangible property and debt instruments.* Title to intangible property and debt instruments acquired under an award or subaward vests upon acquisition in the recipient. The recipient must use that property for the originally-authorized purpose, and the recipient may not encumber the property without approval of SSA. When no longer needed for the originally authorized purpose, disposition of the intangible property will occur in accordance with the provisions of § 435.34(g).

§ 435.37 Property trust relationship.

Real property, equipment, intangible property and debt instruments that are acquired or improved with Federal funds must be held in trust by the recipient as trustee for the beneficiaries of the project or program under which the property was acquired or improved. Agencies may require recipients to record liens or other appropriate notices of record to indicate that personal or real property has been acquired or improved with Federal funds and that use and disposition conditions apply to the property.

PROCUREMENT STANDARDS

§ 435.40 Purpose of procurement standards.

Sections 435.41 through 435.48 set forth standards for use by recipients in establishing procedures for the procurement of supplies and other expendable property, equipment, real property and other services with Federal funds. These standards are furnished to ensure that such materials and services are obtained in an effective manner and in compliance with the provisions of applicable Federal statutes and executive orders. SSA may impose no additional procurement standards or requirements upon recipients, unless spe-

cifically required by Federal statute or executive order or approved by OMB.

§ 435.41 Recipient responsibilities.

The standards contained in this section do not relieve the recipient of the contractual responsibilities arising under its contract(s). The recipient is the responsible authority, without recourse to SSA, regarding the settlement and satisfaction of all contractual and administrative issues arising out of procurements entered into in support of an award or other agreement. This includes disputes, claims, protests of award, source evaluation or other matters of a contractual nature. Matters concerning violation of statute are to be referred to such Federal, State or local authority as may have proper jurisdiction.

§ 435.42 Codes of conduct.

The recipient must maintain written standards of conduct governing the performance of its employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by Federal funds if a real or apparent conflict of interest would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated in this section, has a financial or other interest in the firm selected for an award. The officers, employees, and agents of the recipient may neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors, or parties to subagreements. However, recipients may set standards for situations in which the financial interest is not substantial or the gift is an unsolicited item of nominal value. The standards of conduct must provide for disciplinary actions to be applied for violations of such standards by officers, employees, or agents of the recipient.

§ 435.43 Competition.

All procurement transactions must be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open

and free competition. The recipient must be alert to organizational conflicts of interest as well as noncompetitive practices among contractors that may restrict or eliminate competition or otherwise restrain trade. In order to ensure objective contractor performance and eliminate unfair competitive advantage, contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids and/or requests for proposals must be excluded from competing for such procurements. Awards must be made to the bidder or offeror whose bid or offer is responsive to the solicitation and is most advantageous to the recipient, price, quality and other factors considered. Solicitations must clearly set forth all requirements that the bidder or offeror must fulfill in order for the bid or offer to be evaluated by the recipient. Any and all bids or offers may be rejected when it is in the recipient's interest to do so.

§ 435.44 Procurement procedures.

(a) All recipients must establish written procurement procedures. These procedures must provide, at a minimum, that paragraphs (a)(1), (2), and (3) of this section apply.

(1) Recipients avoid purchasing unnecessary items.

(2) Where appropriate, an analysis is made of lease and purchase alternatives to determine which would be the most economical and practical procurement for the Federal Government.

(3) Solicitations for goods and services provide for all of the following:

(i) A clear and accurate description of the technical requirements for the material, product or service to be procured. In competitive procurements, such a description may not contain features, which unduly restrict competition.

(ii) Requirements which the bidder/offeror must fulfill and all other factors to be used in evaluating bids or proposals.

(iii) A description, whenever practicable, of technical requirements in terms of functions to be performed or performance required, including the range of acceptable characteristics or minimum acceptable standards.

(iv) The specific features of "brand name or equal" descriptions that bidders are required to meet when such items are included in the solicitation.

(v) The acceptance, to the extent practicable and economically feasible, of products and services dimensioned in the metric system of measurement.

(vi) Preference, to the extent practicable and economically feasible, for products and services that conserve natural resources and protect the environment and are energy efficient.

(b) Positive efforts must be made by recipients to utilize small businesses, minority-owned firms, and women's business enterprises, whenever possible. Recipients of Federal awards must take all of the following steps to further this goal:

(1) Ensure that small businesses, minority-owned firms, and women's business enterprises are used to the fullest extent practicable.

(2) Make information on forthcoming opportunities available and arrange time frames for purchases and contracts to encourage and facilitate participation by small businesses, minority-owned firms, and women's business enterprises.

(3) Consider in the contract process whether firms competing for larger contracts intend to subcontract with small businesses, minority-owned firms, and women's business enterprises.

(4) Encourage contracting with consortiums of small businesses, minority-owned firms and women's business enterprises when a contract is too large for one of these firms to handle individually.

(5) Use the services and assistance, as appropriate, of such organizations as the Small Business Administration and the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency in the solicitation and utilization of small businesses, minority-owned firms and women's business enterprises.

(c) The type of procuring instruments used (e.g., fixed price contracts, cost reimbursable contracts, purchase orders, and incentive contracts) may be determined by the recipient but must be appropriate for the particular procurement and for promoting the best