

## **1816.405-277 Award term.**

(a) An award term enables a contractor to become eligible for additional periods of performance or ordering periods under a service contract (as defined in FAR 37.101) by achieving and sustaining the prescribed performance levels under the contract. It incentivizes the contractor for maintaining superior performance by providing an opportunity for extensions of the contract term.

(b) Award terms are best suited for acquisitions where a longer term relationship (generally more than five years) between the Government and a contractor would provide significant benefits to both. Motivating excellent performance, fostering contractor capital investment, and increasing the desirability of the award, thus potentially increasing competition, are benefits that may justify the use of award terms.

(c) While the administrative burden and cost of more frequent procurements to both the Government and potential offerors should be considered when determining whether to use award terms, this decision must be weighed against market stability, the potential changes and advancements in technology, and flexibility to change direction with mission changes and associated frequent procurements.

(d) Award terms may be used in conjunction with contract options under FAR 17.2. Award terms are similar to contract options in that they are conditioned on the Government's continuing need for the contract and the availability of funds. However, FAR 17.207(c)(7) states the contracting officer must determine that the contractor's performance has been acceptable, *e.g.*, received satisfactory ratings. In contrast, to become eligible for an award term, the contractor must maintain a level of performance above acceptable as specified in the Award Term Plan (see 1816.405-277(i)). In contracts with both option periods and award terms, the award term period of performance or ordering period shall begin after completion of any option period of performance or ordering period.

(e) Contracts with award terms shall include a base period of performance or ordering period and may include a designated number of option periods during which the Government will observe and evaluate the contractor's performance allowing the contractor to earn an award term. Additionally, as specified in the Award Term Plan, the contractor may also be evaluated for additional award terms during performance of an earned award term. If the contractor meets or exceeds the performance requirements, there is an on-going need for and desire to continue the contract, funds are available, and the contractor is not listed in the System for Award Management Exclusions, then the contractor may be eligible for contract extension for the period of the award term.

(f) Contracts with award terms shall comply with FAR and NFS restrictions on the overall contract length, such as the 5-year period of performance limitation found at NFS 1817.204.

(g) Award terms may only be used in acquisitions for services exceeding \$20 million dollars. Use of award terms for lower-valued acquisitions may be authorized in exceptional situations such as contract requirements having direct health or safety impacts, where the judgmental assessment of the quality of contractor performance is critical.

(h) Consistent with the Competition in Contracting Act and general procurement principles, the potential award term periods in a procurement must be priced, evaluated, and considered in the initial contract selection process in order to be valid.

(i) All contracts including award terms shall be supported by an Award Term Plan that establishes

criteria for earning an award term and the methodology and schedule for evaluating contractor performance. A copy of the Award Term Plan shall be included in the contract. The contracting officer may unilaterally revise the Award Term Plan. Award Term Plans shall—

- (1) Identify the officials to include Term-Determining Official involved in the award term evaluation and their function;
- (2) Identify and describe each evaluation factor, any subfactors, related performance standards, adjectival ratings, and numerical ranges or weights to be used. The contracting officer should follow the guidance at 1816.405-274 in establishing award term evaluation factors and 1816.405-275 in establishing adjectival rating categories, associated descriptions, numerical scoring system, and weighted scoring system;
- (3) Specify the annual overall rating required for the contractor to be eligible for an award term that reflects a level of performance above acceptable and the number of award terms the contractor may qualify for based on the rating score;
- (4) Identify the evaluation period(s) and the evaluation schedule to be conducted at stated intervals during the contract period of performance or ordering period so that the contractor will periodically be informed of the quality of its performance and the areas in which improvement is expected (*e.g.*, six months, nine months, twelve months, or at other specific milestones), and when the decision points are for the determination that the contractor is eligible for an award term; and
- (5) Identify the contract's base period of performance or ordering period, any option period(s), and total award-term periods(s). Award term periods shall not exceed one year.

(j)

- (1) The Government has the unilateral right not to grant or to cancel award term periods and the associated Award Term Plans if—
  - (i) The contractor has failed to achieve the required performance measures for the corresponding evaluation period;
  - (ii) After earning an award term, the contractor fails to earn an award term in any succeeding year of contract performance, the contracting officer may cancel any award terms that the contractor has earned, but that have not begun;
  - (iii) The contracting officer notifies the contractor that the Government no longer has a need for the award term period before the time an award term period is to begin;
  - (iv) The contractor represented that it was a small business concern prior to award of the contract, the contract was set-aside for small businesses, and the contractor rerepresents in accordance with FAR clause 52.219-28 Post-Award Small Business Program Rerepresentation, that it is no longer a small business; or
  - (v) The contracting officer notifies the contractor that funds are not available for the award term.
- (2) When an award term period is not granted or cancelled, any—
  - (i) Prior award term periods for which the contractor remains otherwise eligible are unaffected.
  - (ii) Subsequent award term periods are also cancelled.

(k) Cancellation of an award term period that has not yet commenced for any of the reasons set forth in paragraph (j) of this section shall not be considered either a termination for convenience or termination for default, and shall not entitle the contractor to any termination settlement or any other compensation. If the award term is cancelled, a unilateral modification will cite the clause as the authority.

**Parent topic:** Subpart 1816.4—Incentive Contracts