

# Writing Bid or Purchasing Specifications

## The Key Element to Successful Purchasing

1 hour Professional Standards Training





## What is a Specification (or spec)?

- A specification (or spec) is a description of the product or service a user seeks to procure
  - AND
- A description of what a bidder/ vendor must offer to be considered for an award



## Why have Specifications?

- 1) Quality and cost control standards
- 2) Avoid misunderstandings between suppliers, buyers, users and other district officials
- 3) In the absence of the buyer/ purchasing agent, they allow someone else to fill in
- 4) They are essential when you need to set down all relevant aspects of something you want to purchase, to submit a list of these aspects to two or more suppliers, and ask these suppliers to indicate (bid) the price they will charge for the specific product or service.
- 5) Helps the vendor understand exactly what you want so a competitive price can be quoted
- 6) They are required for the Child Nutrition Program



What is the  
goal of having  
and using  
product Specs?

The goal when creating product specifications is to be:

- Specific enough for vendors to provide exactly the product needed by the sponsor
- Not so specific as to limit the number of vendors that can provide the specified product



What  
influences the  
types of  
information  
included on  
the spec?

- 1) Time and money available
- 2) Production systems/ equipment available
- 3) Storage facilities
- 4) Employee skill levels
- 5) Menu requirements
- 6) Budgetary limitations
- 7) Service style

# Writing Bid Specifications

What Are The First Two Documents You Need To Have Before You Begin To Write Bid Specifications?

- 1. CYCLE MENUS
- 2. STANDARDIZED RECIPES



# Writing Bid Specifications- The Details

- What is the Definition of the item to be purchased?
- What are Specification Characteristics of the item to be purchased?
- How to Develop Bid Specifications?



# Specifications Definition

The Physical Descriptions of Products Material,  
and/or Process

Words to describe:

- Color
- Size
- Packaging for the Product

Numbers or Letters to Describe:

- Grade
- Weight
- Quantity





# Product Specification Information

- Name of Product
- Description of the Product
- Case Pack and Weight
- Minimum and Maximum Size and Pieces
- Main Ingredient(s)
- Other Product Ingredients
- Prohibited Ingredients
- Nutritional Standards
- Unit on Which Award is Made
- Quality Indicators
- Meal Pattern Requirements/Child Nutrition (CN) Label

# Product Specification Information- Name of the Product

## Name of the Product

- WG Breaded Chicken Nuggets
- Milk, Fluid, Unflavored
- Apples, Red Delicious
- WG Breaded Cod
- Beans, Green
- Cups, Foam

# Product Specification Information- Description of the Product

## Description of the Product

- Clearly Identify the product listed
  - Type
  - Cut, shape
  - Portion size
  - Precooked weight
  - Frozen, fresh or Dry



# Product Specification Information- Description of the Product Continued

- A vendor will need a complete description of the product you are looking to purchase.
- If specifying brand, SFA must allow equivalent
- When specifying a brand you must include:
  - Manufacturer's name
  - Manufacturer's name for product (e.g. rounds, triangles, etc.)
  - Manufacturer's code number
  - Manufacturer's pack size



# Product Specification Information- Product Packaging

## Describes How the Items is Packaged:

- 6/#10 Cans
- 4/5# Loaves or Not to Exceed 25#
- Individually Wrapped
- 48, 72, 96 to the Case
- Cases Can't Exceed 30 Pounds

## Product Specification Information- Product Sizes

- Minimum?
- Maximum?
- Example:
  - Minimum serving 3.9 ounces
  - Maximum serving 4.1 ounces
  - 6 nuggets per 5-ounce portion

Product  
Specification  
Information-  
Main  
Ingredients

Specify the Main Ingredients Desired



Pinto & black beans



Individual Whole wheat wrap



Whole muscle white chicken breast  
meat

# Product Specification Information- Other Product Ingredients

## Other Product Ingredients

Describes What other ingredients can be included:

- Whole-grain Pasta
- Whole-wheat Flour
  - Spices
  - Emulsifiers
  - Soy Proteins
- Vegetable Purees
- Thickening Agents





# Product Specification Information- Prohibited Ingredients

## Prohibited Ingredients

What ingredients are prohibited?

### Examples:

- Food additives
- Artificial colors and flavors
- Hydrogenated fat
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Assorted allergens
- Soy
- Egg
- Peanuts

# Product Specification Information- Nutritional Standards

What are the nutritional standards for the product?

Examples

- Pinto beans and black beans combined must provide a 1.5 oz. equivalent for the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement for CNP
- Whole grain-rich tortilla must provide a 1.5 oz. equivalent for the Grains component for CNP.

# Product Specification Information- Crediting Documentation

## Meal Pattern Requirements/Child Nutrition (CN) Label and Product Formulation Statements

- Does the product contain certain meal components?
- Does the product have a CN label and/or a product formulation statement?



# Product Specification Information- Awards are based on ?

## Unit on Which the Award is Made

How will you determine which company is offering the best price for an acceptable product?

### Examples are:

- Price by the case
- Price by the serving size
- Price per pound



# Product Specification Information- Quality Indicators



Quality Indicators

Fruits and Vegetables

Grade A or U.S. Fancy = First Quality Private Label

Grade B or U.S. Choice = Second Quality Private Label

Veg- Grade B or U.S. Extra Standard = Second Quality Private Label

Grade C or U.S. Standard = Third Quality Private Label

# Product Specification Information- Quality Indicators, Continued

## Quality Indicators, continued

- Due to the diversity in the nature of produce products, specific standards have been established for individual products.
- Including grade standards on the solicitation document specification ensures the quality of produce purchased will meet the needs of your nutrition program.

# Product Specification Information- Buy American

## Buy American

**The Buy American Provision** is a very important provision in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (NSLP/SBP). This provision does not apply to Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsors who are not school food authorities operating the NSLP/SBP.

This provision requires that a school food authority purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic commodities or products. The term “domestic commodity or product” means an agricultural commodity that is produced in the United States or a food product that is processed in the United States substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States







# Example of a Specification for Apples

1. What do you want to purchase
  - Red Delicious Apples
2. What are your requirements
  - Domestic, U.S. fancy
3. What is the pack size you would like
  - 125- 138 count to a case
4. How many do you think you will purchase during the year
  - 1000 cases
5. Other specifications- these are things you would put in your Request for Proposal:
  - Must be produced in the US
  - Prefer locally grown when possible. (Locally grown is determined by each district)
  - Produce deliveries will be needed Tuesdays and Thursdays between 6:30am and 10:00am.





# Example of a Specification for Bagels

- 1. What do you want to purchase
  - 2 oz Bagel
- 2. What are your requirements
  - Whole Grain
  - Individually Wrapped or Bulk
  - Plain or Flavored
- 3. What is the pack size you would like
  - 72 per case
- 4. How many do you think you will purchase during the year
  - 350 cases
- 5. Do you have an example of a brand you have used?
  - Lender's (Pinnacle Food Group) 00074
- 6. You must allow the vendor to choose an alternative. This allows all companies that meet this specification an equal opportunity to put in price for consideration.
  - An equivalent that meets the above specifications will be considered

# Product Specification Information for Non-Food Items

Specifications apply to non-food items such as:

- Office Supplies
- Kitchen Equipment
- Janitorial Supplies
- Security
- Marketing Materials
- Phone plans

## Developing Specifications Process

- Develop a cycle menu
- Create standardized recipes
- Evaluate customer quality and acceptance of current items
- Research the market on new items
- Request a description of the product from the manufacturer
- Taste test with your customers
- Write the bid specifications

## Results of a Good Specification

- Supports fair and equitable treatment of vendors
- SFA acquires what they need
- Time spent is minimized
- Best price or value
- Customer satisfaction

## Resources:

Click for More  
Information

[School Nutrition Produce Specifications](#)

[USDA Specifications: US Grade Standards](#)

[USDA Product Specifications & Requirements](#)

<https://theicn.org/resources/943/january.../processing-usda-foods-at-the-sfa-level.pdf>

# Questions?

- Contact your CN representative with any questions  
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Child Nutrition Program Administration  
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