

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to questions are in **bold**.

1. What is a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA)?

A BPA “is a simplified method of filling anticipated repetitive needs for supplies or services by establishing “charge accounts” with qualified sources of supply (FAR Subpart 13.303-1).” A BPA is not a contract and may be cancelled at any time by the NIH or the vendor.

2. What are the benefits of using a BPA?

A BPA has two benefits that assist NIH buyers:

- **vendor discounts**
- **pre-negotiated terms and conditions.**

3. Can the Government-wide commercial purchase card (purchase card) be used against a BPA?

A purchase card may be used to place an order against a BPA as long as it is accepted by the BPA holder.

4. Do BPA discounts apply to purchase card orders against BPAs?

Yes, the BPA discounts are to be honored whether the buyer uses a purchase card or places a BPA Call as long as the purchase card is accepted by the BPA holder.

5. What is the period of performance of an NIH-Wide BPA?

The NIH BPA’s period of performance is typically one year and is reviewed each year for usage, discounts, and vendor performance prior to renewal.

6. What is the maximum period of performance for a BPA Call?

The period of performance for a BPA Call cannot be longer than one year.

7. Can a BPA Call for services extend beyond the period of performance of the parent BPA?

Yes, BPA Calls for services may extend beyond the period of performance of the parent BPA. However, if a BPA expires and is not renewed, you may not add more funds to the BPA Call.

8. Can a BPA Call be placed on a BPA before it expires?

Yes, a BPA Call can be placed against a BPA before it expires. However, performance must begin before expiration of the BPA. A BPA Call cannot be placed against a parent BPA with performance on the BPA Call to commence after the parent BPA ends.

9. Each BPA has a maximum order limitation (MOL). Is the MOL per BPA Call or per the life of the BPA?

The MOL is per BPA Call. No BPA Call can exceed the limitation. If the BPA Call is likely to be over this limitation, buyers should consider creating a purchase order or a contract. In addition, the buyer is also limited by his/her warrant and may not place a BPA Call above that amount.

10. What Tax Identification Number (TIN) should the buyer choose when placing a BPA Call?

The buyer should use the TIN established on the parent BPA when creating a BPA Call.

11. Where can a buyer find the discount structure of a BPA?

The discount structure may be found in NBS PRISM within the “text” field.

12. What is a split purchase and is it allowable against a BPA?

A split purchase is a single purchase that is intentionally divided into two or more separate purchase to avoid exceeding the single purchase limit of a buyer or contracting mechanism or to avoid obtaining competition. Splitting a purchase is not allowable. If the BPA Call is likely to exceed the MOL, a purchase order or a contract should be awarded.

13. What should I do if a vendor will be on site and/or have access to any governmental systems or sensitive information?

The buyer should contact his/her local IC’s [Information Systems Security Officer \(ISSO\)](#) for assistance. The ISSO can assist the buyer and customer in creating a Statement of Work that includes language to protect government information, property, and information technology systems. Specific terms and conditions must be added to the BPA Call.

14. The BPA Call is above \$2,500 and is for a service. How would the buyer know if the BPA Call is Service Contract Act (SCA) applicable? If found applicable, what should the buyer do?

If the service BPA Call is placed against an Open Market (OM) BPA and is over \$2,500, the buyer should first determine if the service is subject to the SCA (for example, janitorial services) by reviewing FAR Subpart 22.10. If applicable, the buyer shall add a [Department of Labor \(DOL\) Wage Determination](#) to the BPA Call. The DOL website also includes a user's guide.

15. Should BPA Calls be competed?

If an OM BPA Call is above the micro-purchase threshold, the buyer shall solicit from at least three OM BPA holders within the same commodity/service to promote competition to the maximum extent practicable. Whenever practicable, a buyer should request quotations or offers from two sources not included in the previous solicitation. A buyer may solicit from one source if the buyer determines that the circumstances of the contract action deem only one source reasonably available (e.g., urgency, exclusive licensing agreements, brand-name or industrial mobilization).

If a Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) BPA Call is above the micro-purchase threshold, the buyer shall solicit at least three FSS BPA holders within the same commodity/service. A buyer may limit competition if a limited sources justification is signed and approved by the buyer (see FAR Subpart 8.405-6 for more details).

16. Can OM BPA commodities/services and FSS BPA commodities/services be placed on the same BPA Call?

No, these products/services cannot be placed on the same BPA Call.

17. If an item or service is not covered under the BPA, can a buyer purchase that item under the BPA?

No, a purchase order or contract would have to be awarded to the vendor. A buyer may request that the BPA holder negotiate with the BPA Program Branch to add that item or service.

18. I need to complete a modification to deobligate funds on a BPA Call and the parent BPA has been cancelled; however I receive an error message: "This call exceeds the maximum ordering requirements for the BPA" within PRISM what do I do?

If the buyer receives this message, they should contact the BPA Program Branch office (via voice at 301-496-5212 or via [email](#)) so the office can reopen the BPA for deobligation

purposes. After completion of the modification, the buyer must again contact the BPA Program Office so the BPA can be closed.

19. How do I know if a vendor is an active BPA holder?

The BPA Alphabetical and Commodity listings can be found on the [BPA Program Office webpage](#) and searched by vendor name or commodity. If a vendor is listed on the BPA listing, then it is active. The buyer may contact the BPA Program Branch if a vendor is near its expiration and the buyer would like to know if it is likely to be extended.

20. If a vendor is not active and is not listed; how can the vendor be added?

Buyers should refer the vendor to the BPA Program Branch either via [email](#) or the helpline at 301-496-5212. The BPA Program Branch will work with the vendor to determine if the vendor is a good fit for the Program.

21. May hotel BPAs be used for any other purpose than peer review meetings?

No, the hotel BPAs are for the exclusive use of the Scientific Research and Evaluation Award (SREA)/Peer Review program. Use of the hotel BPAs for purposes other than SREA Peer Review meetings is strictly prohibited.

22. I am entering DCIS on my BPA Call, is there anything I need to change from the Parent BPA's DCIS entry and the one on the BPA Call?

The Contracting Officer listed on the parent BPA automatically transfers to the DCIS entry for the BPA Call. Buyers must change the Contracting Officer name to reflect the individual awarding the BPA Call.

23. Should I contact the BPA Program Branch if a vendor is continuously performing poorly?

Yes. If a vendor continues to perform poorly buyers should contact the BPA Program Branch either via email or via the helpline. In addition, the BPA Program Office accepts past performance evaluations from customers. A buyer can find the form at the NIH BPA Program Office website and should [email the evaluation](#).

24. What should the buyer do if they think the BPA holders is not honoring the negotiated discounts and pricing?

The buyer should let the BPA holder know the discount that is reflected on the BPA (the discount structure is located within the text field in the PRISM award document) and if the BPA holder still does not honor the discount the buyer should contact the BPA Program Branch immediately so the BPA Administrator can follow-up with the vendor.

25. May a BPA holder visit a buyer's office to speak about its products?

A buyer and a BPA holder may meet and discuss the BPA holder's products/services. This is part of the market research process and is allowable under FAR Part 10-Market Research.