

Procurement Guidance - (7/2014)

T3.10.9 First Article Approval and Testing

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T3.10.9 First Article Approval and Testing

A First Article

1 General

a. First article testing and approval involves evaluating a contractor's initial, preproduction, or sample model or lot to ensure the contractor can furnish a product conforming to all contract requirements. First article testing may be appropriate when:

- (1) The contractor has not previously furnished the product to the Government;
- (2) The product was previously furnished to the Government, but changes in processes or specifications occurred; production was discontinued for an extended period, or the product developed problems during its life;
- (3) The product is based on a performance specification; or
- (4) It is essential to have a first article as a manufacturing standard.

b. First article testing generally need not be conducted for research and development products or commercial items.

2 Minimizing Risk Revised 10/2010

a. To minimize risk to both FAA and the contractor, the first article test is preferably conducted before the contractor acquires materials or components for use in production. Departing from this sequence of testing and then purchasing materials increases risk to both parties and should be avoided when possible. Also, appropriation statutes may include restrictions on ordering long lead items or production units prior to completion of the first article testing (the CO should review appropriation statutes for these potential restrictions).

b. When establishing delivery schedules, the procurement team should consider the time needed to conduct the first article test, order and receive materials or components, and produce items. Risk can be minimized by establishing realistic schedules that include sufficient time to complete all the requirements that precede production, including first article testing and ordering and delivery of materials and components. However, circumstances may arise that do not allow this customary sequence leading to production. In unique circumstances where this cannot be done, the procurement team may consider possible alternatives that would facilitate an expedient delivery schedule of acceptable items. For example, under Alternate II to the "First Article Approval" clauses, the CO may authorize the contractor in writing to either "...acquire *specific* material and components or commence production *to the extent essential* to meet the delivery schedule" prior to first article approval. The authorization is limited to *specific* materials and

components and production *to the extent essential*. The procurement team should examine the specific facts and minimize FAA's risk by authorizing only specific items and extent of production truly necessary to meet schedule. Long lead items are possible candidates for this type of early authorization.

c. The CO should include first article testing clause/alternate clause most appropriate in the situation.

3 Testing and Approval Revised 10/2010

The procurement team should determine the appropriate first article testing method and clearly delineate the requirements in the contract. The following illustrates factors that should be considered when establishing first article requirements, and stated in the contract:

- a. Will FAA or the contractor conduct the first article test;
- b. Performance or other characteristics that must be met;
- c. Detailed technical requirements for first article testing;
- d. First article test report data required in contractor-performed testing;
- e. Tests FAA will use when it performs the tests;
- f. If the approved first article will serve as the manufacturing model; and
- g. Disposition of the approved first article.

4 Waiving First Article Revised 10/2010

Alternate II of the "First Article Approval" clauses authorizes the CO to waive the first article in instances where supplies identical or similar to those called for have previously been delivered by the offeror and accepted by the Government. The procurement team should use this approach when appropriate for the circumstances. If the potential to waive first article testing exists, the procurement team may consider alternative offers based on including or omitting the testing in the price and delivery schedule. Evaluation criteria should indicate how this will be treated in the evaluation.

5 Coordination

The CO should facilitate the testing and acceptance by coordinating actions and individuals that will participate in the process. The following illustrates the nature of the facilitation:

- a. Distribute copies of test requirements to entities involved with the testing or approval, such as to Government laboratories that have this responsibility.
- b. Notify the Government entity that has responsibility for first article testing or approval sufficiently in advance of their receiving either a test item or test report.
- c. Specify that the Government laboratory or other activity responsible for first article testing or evaluation inform the contracting office promptly whether to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove the first article.

6 Changes

Any changes in the drawings, designs, or specifications determined by the CO to be necessary as a result of first article testing should be made under the "Changes" clause, and not by the notice of approval, conditional approval, or disapproval furnished to the contractor.

B Clauses

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C Forms

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