

STATEMENT OF WORK

For Supplies and Simple Services



Bureau of Indian Affairs
Acquisition Division
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Purpose

- Provide a user friendly guideline for writing a simple statement of work.
- What is a SOW?
- Importance of the SOW
- Benefits of a well written SOW
- Common pitfalls in SOWs



The purpose of this presentation is to provide a user friendly resource and general guidance to the program office contracting officer's representatives who compile the necessary elements of a purchase request package. This information is targeted primarily towards CORs and technical experts who seek supplies and simple services. This presentation highlights what a statement of work is, why it is necessary, who does it, and practices the writer can adopt to be successful.

Before we identify the elements of a statement of work, let's first review who the players are and what their responsibilities are in this process.

The Players: Contracting Officer

- A person with the delegated authority to enter into, administer, and terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings (FAR 1.602-1)
- The person who requests and considers the advice of specialists, technical experts and others yet is granted wide latitude to exercise business judgment to independently decide whom to award the contract.
- Reviews, edits, and makes suggestions to the SOW drafter for completeness.



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The Players: COR

- Program personnel responsible for synthesizing and submitting all elements of the purchase request package and working with the CO. The COR has no authority to determine who the contractor will be.
- Responsible for writing (individually or with program team) and revising the SOW.
- COR responsibilities (to the contract) are delegated in writing by the contracting officer (FAR 1.604).



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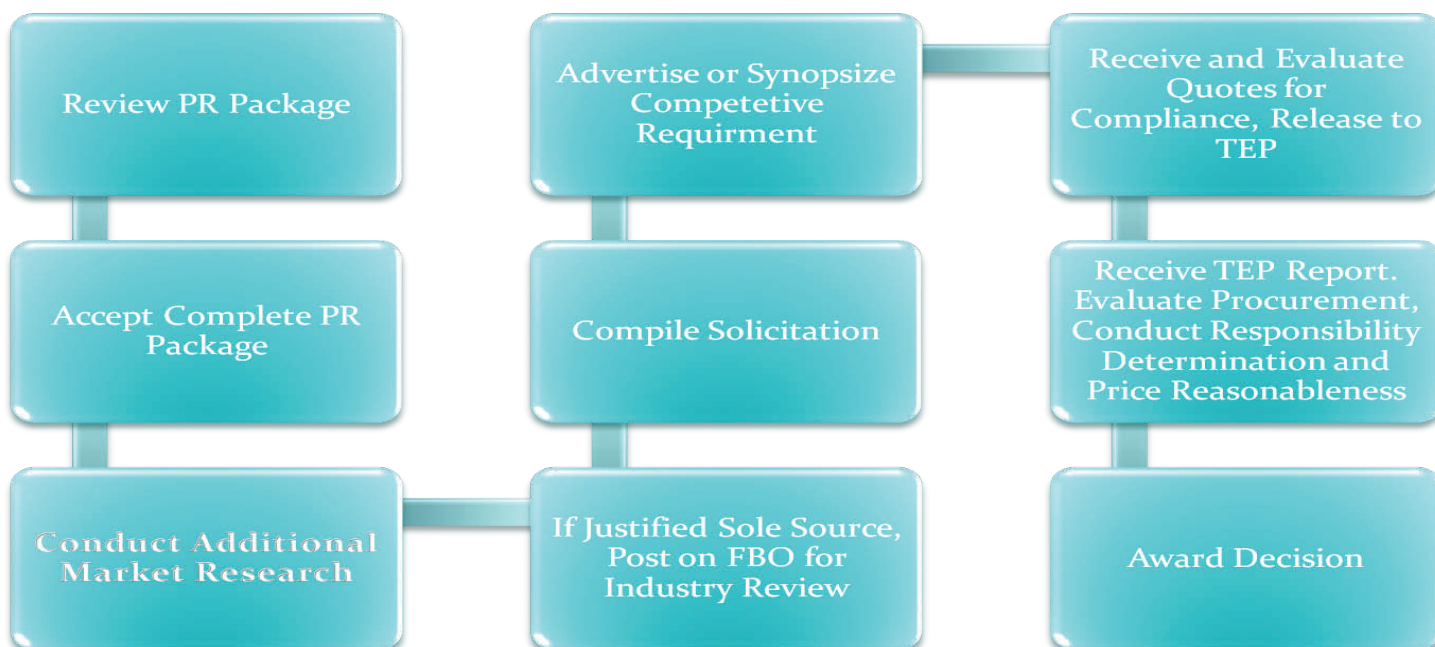
Although this briefing will not cover the procurement process itself, an overview of the major steps are included for both the COR and the CO.

Purchase Request Process (COR)



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Simplified Procurement (CO)



Preliminary Questions

Before starting the SOW, briefly identify:

- What is the problem to be resolved?
- What resources will it take to complete this task?
- How do I know it's good when I get it?



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At this point the writer should have completed preliminary market research. The program need should now be accounted for with a rough estimate set aside in its budget. With its bona fide need the program office is now moving forward to writing down its need. Because this need comes from the program itself, it is the program's responsibility to define its own project need.

At the outset of writing the SOW, the writer should know the answers to the following:

What is the problem to be resolved?

What resources will it take to complete this task?

How do I know it's good when I get it?

What is a Statement of Work?



- Written document of government need for commercial work
- Work is stated in terms of mission need
- Identifies performance objectives
- Establishes tasks contractors must perform
- Defines timelines, standards of performance
- Defines deliverables and acceptance criteria



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Now that we have a big picture view of our need, let's further define the statement of work. From the technical standpoint the SOW is the single most critical document in the acquisition process. Therefore it must be written clearly and accurately and contain the necessary elements of project management.

Why is it Important?

- Defines responsibilities for all parties
- Measurable objectives (know when work is complete)
- Monitor work performance
- Through deliverables, establishes when payment for work is authorized



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Why do we need to do all of this? It's the most efficient way to define the work needed to be performed, capture roles and responsibilities, monitor and evaluate work performance and subsequently determine if the contractor should be paid for services rendered. Writing a statement of work in conjunction with the standards of project management is thinking the project through and doing the work up front.

A well written statement of work is also important because it could be read by a number of people. In most instances it will be read by the program, the contracting officer and industry. However, in the instances it causes public scrutiny it could be read by the Department of the Interior solicitor, Government Accountability Office administrative judge, and perhaps the media. Although this doesn't happen in the vast majority of cases, it should be noted that the SOW should be written so well that these various personnel can read it and quickly understand the government's requirement.

Benefits of a well-written SOW

- Creates a common understanding
- Eliminates ambiguities
- Allows vendors to accurately schedule and price their proposed effort (higher quality)
- Speeds up procurement process
- Minimizes post award contract modifications, disputes and claims



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The benefits of a well-written SOW are many. It is one source from beginning to end we all turn to for a shared understanding of the work to be performed. Because the language is clear, concise and complete, it allows for the vendor to accurately schedule the project and price it. Therefore a well-written SOW increases the quality of quotes received.

If the SOW does not state exactly what is wanted or does not state it precisely, it *will* generate contract administration problems for the COR, the contractor and the CO.

The Elements of a SOW

Typically include:

- Background
- Objectives
- Scope
- Tasks
- Delivery
- Government-Furnished Property (GFP)
- Security Considerations
- Travel
- Special Material Requirements
- Other Unique Requirements and Considerations
- Place of performance
- Period of performance



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Because the SOW is a written reflection of what the project should accomplish, many of the elements of a SOW are actually descriptive elements of the program's project. A more thorough explanation of the elements in this slide is provided in the sample SOW.

The simple statement of work does not include a deliverable for a contractor's plan to perform the requirement. By this I mean *a deliverable is not the quoter's technical plan*. The SOW should be written so that, including the RFQ package instructions, the quoter can use the SOW to prepare a proposed approach. The quote is a proposed approach in response to the needs described in the SOW.

SOW Best Practices



Service contracts:

- Must include contractor identification (FAR 11.106)
- Must not be for personal services (FAR 37.101)
- Must avoid SOW-preparation conflicts of interest:
 - *Agencies should normally prepare their own work statements. When contractor assistance is necessary, the contractor might often be in a position to favor its own products or capabilities. To overcome the possibility of bias, contractors are prohibited from supplying a system or services acquired on the basis of work statements growing out of their services (FAR 9.505-2(2))*

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A few best practices, of course, include mandatory FAR elements. Furthermore in most cases the SOW should be written by the government. If a contractor is under contract to perform statement of work writing services then the contract should disqualify the SOW writer's company the opportunity to compete for the new requirement.

Additional best practices are to use clear, precise language. This is captured by using limited adjectives and appropriate work and product words. Please review the following words and consider using them to shape the SOW.

SOW Best Practices (cont.)



Work Words (for performance of services):

- Analyze; Annotate; Attend; Audit; Build; Calculate;
- Consider Construct; Compare; Create; Differentiate;
- Develop; Examine; Establish; Estimate; Evaluate;
- Fabricate; Generate; Implement; Install; Inspect;
- Integrate; Maintain; Modify; Monitor ; Organize;
- Perform; Plan; Probe; Produce; Pursue; Reason;
- Resolve : Record; Recommend; Review ; Revise; Study;
- Seek ; Search; Scan; Screen; Solve; Test; Trace; Track
- Update

SOW Best Practices (cont.)



Product Words (usually a deliverable):

- Agenda; Audio visual aids; Books; Cards; Certificates;
- Charts; Documentation; Drafts; Drawings; Equipment;
- Files; Findings ; Guides; Handbooks; Graphics sheets;
- Illustrations; Lists; Logs; Manuals; Manuscript;
- Materials; Meetings ; Minutes; Outlines; Pamphlets;
- Plans; Procedures; Publications; Recommendations;
- Reproducible; Requests; Reports; Specifications;
- Standards; Systems

Writing Tips



Step-by-step process

- 1.) Determine project objectives
 - 2.) Request assignment to a contracting officer
 - 3.) Identify all individual requirements required to meet project objectives (i.e., Elements of an SOW, slide 11)
 - 4.) Arrange individual requirements in logical sequence
 - 5.) Create an SOW outline
 - 6.) Write the SOW
 - 7.) Revise the SOW
- Writers are encouraged to gather SOW examples (www.FBO.gov), (GSA SOW library) and create program SOW libraries

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Now it's time to start writing the SOW.

(Step 1) First of all we need to determine the project objectives. This step involves developing clear statements about why the agency is undertaking the procurement, and what it hopes to achieve.

(Step 2) If this is the first time or first time in awhile you have undertaken this particular project it is wise to request a contracting officer be assigned to your potential requirement. The contracting officer can help lay out the requirements for the procurement and the procurement schedule. This will reduce delays in award by identifying a realistic procurement action lead time which can be built into the program's project management schedule.

(Step 3) Next the SOW writer should determine all of the individual requirements that must be accomplished if the project and program office is to meet its mission objectives. Just a few considerations are:

Deliverables

What supplies or services are required?

Who will use the supplies and how?

Standards of Performance

What performance and accuracy standards can be specified for the supplies or services?

Personnel -- (typically for services only)

What categories of staff should conduct the project for the contractor?

What should be their qualifications?

What should be the qualifications and experience of the contractor?

Methodology

What is the appropriate methodology?

Are there different possible methodologies?

What stages or phases can the project be broken into?

Schedule

When are the results of the project needed?

How long should the project take?

What is the schedule for the deliverables?

Location

Where should the project take place?

Will travel be required?

If at any point you do not know the answer to these questions, simply do more market research and check with internal sources to fill in the gaps.

(Step 4) After all of the requirements have been listed, they should be arranged into a logical sequence.

(Step 5) An outline provides structure for the document and saves a great deal of writing time. A detailed outline makes it easier to focus on content and to spot inconsistencies, redundancies, and gaps that may need to be filled. It saves time in the writing phase by providing a clear picture of the interrelationship among ideas, and the most logical order to present them.

(Step 6) Once the outline has been completed, write the first draft. The purpose of the first draft is to put everything on paper without editing.

(Step 7) After getting the first draft written it's appropriate to return to it and edit it. Some questions to consider in revisions are:

Does it contain sufficient information?

Is the writing based on sound reasoning?

Is the subject clearly stated?

Is the subject advanced in clear stages?

Is the connection between the stages clear?

Sometimes the best way to ensure the SOW is complete is to ask a colleague to review it.

SOW Pitfalls



- Ambiguous language
- Overly restrictive language
- Unclear role responsibility (use of passive language)
- Partially defined project parameters
- Long-winded, complicated sentences (one idea per sentence; one topic per paragraph)
- Convoluted descriptions (ALWAYS use plain English)
- No market research conducted
- SOW written by non-government personnel or by copying and pasting website language or contractor quote.

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The pitfalls of the SOW have: ambiguous and restrictive language, unclear role responsibilities, and unclear project parameters. In addition SOW's which are wordy, filled with technical jargon and do not follow plain English are rarely understood or agreed upon by all parties.

The program office must also do due diligence by completing market research and ensuring we are doing our own work and writing the statement of work based upon government need rather than contractor capabilities. Next we will cover in more depth two of the major, avoidable SOW pitfalls.

Overcoming Ambiguity



- Ambiguity can create delays, disputes, higher contract costs, unsatisfactory performance, and frustration
- Litigation often holds ambiguity against the drafter
- Avoid ambiguous language such as:
 - And/or; As directed by the COR; In accordance with best industry practices; To include but not limited to; In good working order; Properly assembled; Material of the highest quality, Nearly, Approximately, etc.

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A major pitfall in writing statements of work is the use of ambiguous language. Ambiguity often stops performance in its tracks. Therefore it is often best to write a clear, precise and unambiguous statement of work to avoid delays, disputes, confusion, etc.

Overcoming an Overly Restrictive Work Statement

- Do NOT over specify by saying how the task is to be accomplished
- Restrictive statements induce government responsibility for the outcome
- ✓ Specify what the end goal is
- ✓ Allow for the vendor to specify how the end goal will be achieved



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Another major pitfall is the use of an overly restrictive work statement. Of course there is a time and place for restrictive requirement statements. In certain circumstances for instance it may be determined by the government that issues in safety, security and systems compatibility may be fairly detailed. Overly restrictive statements inhibit competition, increase government ownership of risk and typically do not allow for the government to take advantage of contractor innovation and efficiencies.

To overcome overly restrictive language we must write a work statement describing the salient, functional, or basic characteristics so that we can move towards performance-oriented requirements documents. To overcome restrictiveness and become more performance-oriented we must describe the objectives to be accomplished; the end goal, or the desired achievement. We must also include all pertinent information needed so the vendor can provide a quote with a technical approach which tells us how our objectives will be accomplished.

Summary

A well-written statement of work:

- Is critical for contract performance
- Establishes minimum requirements
- Eliminates ambiguities
- Is not overly restrictive
- Influences who will compete for government work
- Is a tool to measure performance post award



In summary, the statement of work is critical for quote preparations, contract performance and measuring contract performance.

QUESTIONS

Please contact your local acquisition professional for any questions.



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Should you have any questions regarding the statement of work or procurement process, kindly contact your local acquisition professional.

Generic Statement of Work (SOW) Template

The statement of work (SOW) format is meant to be a guide and is not necessarily all-inclusive; as such, contents should be tailored to the requirement. Consult your BIA contracting officer for further guidance.

The program office will need to prepare a SOW, for instance, when acquiring a service but not relying on the contractor's commercial description to define the requirement. In this situation, purchasers are tailoring the commercial services performed by the contractor (e.g., program management services) to meet a particular government need (e.g., management of a process improvement program).

SOW Format

[Background](#)

[Objectives](#)

[Scope](#)

[Tasks](#)

[Delivery](#)

[Government-Furnished Property \(GFP\)](#)

[Security Considerations](#)

[Travel](#)

[Special Material Requirements](#)

[Other Unique Requirements and Considerations](#)

[Place of performance](#)

[Period of performance](#)

Background

Identified as the Introduction, this section provides information needed to acquaint the reader with the basic acquisition situation. The background information may:

- Define the program mission;
 - Identify the requirement in very general terms;
 - Describe why the project is being pursued and how it relates to other projects;
 - Summarize any statutory authority or regulations affecting the overall requirement;
- and

Identify any background materials attached to the SOW.

Objectives

This section should provide a concise overview of:

- The contract effort goals and objectives; and
- How the results or end products will be used.

Scope

Provide a brief statement of what the government expects to accomplish under the contract-the breadth and limitations of the contract effort. It should not include specific work tasks or a description of deliverable products.

For example:

The government has a need for non-personal information technology project management services in the Southwest Regional Office. The contractor shall not perform inherently governmental functions under this contract but shall manage the relocation of 700 IT items to one central location. The contractor shall coordinate the relocation with the relocation product owners in 8 offices (items are defined in appendix A; offices and points of contact are defined in appendix B).

A second example:

The government has a need for non- personal services training on economic development in Native American communities. The contractor shall provide training to approximately 30 personnel at BIA office space (defined in place of performance).

Tasks

Sometimes identified as “Requirements” or “Work Requirements,” this section defines the tasks that the contractor must complete during contract performance. The description of task requirements will depend on the approach that is selected to describe the required effort.

For a **performance-based work statement**, this section should describe requirements in terms of results required rather than the methods for completing the work. This latitude will permit the contractor to develop new and innovative ways to complete those tasks.

Performance-based work statements are the standard for commercial items when we are acquiring supplies or services based on definite performance (move furniture from point A to point B) or design requirements (Smartphone).

For a **level of effort statement of work**, this section should identify all tasks that must be performed and the hours to be devoted to each task.

Level of effort work statements are used in times like repair, engineering, call center, help desk, etc. when it is not possible for the government to determine the extent or duration of the work.

For a **detailed statement of work**, this section should describe how the service must be accomplished. It may include precise measurements, tolerances, materials, quality control requirements, and other government requirements that control the processes of the contractor.

Detailed work statements may be appropriate when the government requires specifications and standards, security requirements, and approved curriculums.

This section must describe requirements in a way that permits contractor personnel to perform the service without direct government supervision. Contractor personnel must not be subject to the type of supervision and control usually prevailing between the government and its employees, also known as personal services. For example, a SOW may permit the government to approve key personnel, but must not permit the government to approve all personnel performing the service. The SOW should also not include words (e.g., “use methods directed by the **contracting officer’s representative (COR)**”) that appear to indicate that the government is managing day-to-day operations. Other items to consider:

- ✦ Specify requirements clearly so that all readers can understand them.
 - Reference only the absolute minimum applicable specifications and standards needed.
 - Tailor specifications and other documents.
- Separate general information from direction.

Task Example

3.1 Task Areas

Include specific titles of all tasks for required performance.

Task 4.1 Title as applicable

Task 4.2 Title as applicable

Task 4.3 Title as applicable

3.2 Project Milestones and Completion Dates (Estimates and as applicable)

Task Number	Work Milestones	Projected Completion Date
4.1	Describe in-process milestone as applicable (first for this task)	Date
	Describe in-process milestone as applicable (second for this task)	Date
	Describe in-process milestone as applicable (third for this task)	Date
4.2	Describe in-process milestone as applicable	Date
4.3	Describe in-process milestone as applicable	Date

4.1 Task 1 - Title

Describe the specific service to be provided for this task. Include milestones that are to be accomplished as applicable and as identified on the milestone schedule. Milestones can include such things as preliminary reports or data submittals, attendance at meetings, etc.

4.2 Task 2 - Title

Describe the specific services to be provided. Include milestones that are to be accomplished as applicable and as identified on the milestone schedule. Milestones can include such things as preliminary reports or data submittals, attendance at meetings, etc.

4.3 Task 3 - Title

Describe the specific services to be provided. Include milestones that are to be accomplished as applicable and as identified on the milestone schedule. Milestones can include such things as preliminary reports or data submittals, attendance at meetings, etc.

Delivery

If contractors are onsite or deliver a product, a statement similar to the example below shall be included:

Example:

Contractor Identification: When performing as contractor, the contractor shall identify themselves as contractors for the government both orally and in writing. In addition, all materials produced under contract must be labeled sufficiently to identify it as contractor produced materials. Under no circumstances shall the contractor state or imply that it is acting on behalf of the government.

This section should clearly state:

- What the contractor must deliver. If different tasks have different delivery requirements, they must be clearly identified.
- When the contractor must deliver. This may be stated using actual dates, days after contract award, or using some other method that clearly marks the required delivery date.
- Where the contractor must deliver the service. This may be stated as a location, an organization, a person identified by position (e.g., contracting officer's representative, a person identified by name or using some other description.)
- What documentation (if any) the contractor must obtain from the government to verify government receipt of the delivery.

Other items to consider: Include any associated review periods or incorporation of government comments as applicable. Deliverables are different than task completion milestones. Milestones may not require a specific submittal. Include here the schedule for when final products such as data, reports or other items are required to be furnished to the primary requestor.

Example Deliverable Schedule

Deliverable	Description	Quantity/Media	Date Completed
1	Identify the specific deliverable	e.g. 5 printed copies and 3 copies on CD-ROM	mm-dd-yyyy
	Government review (as applicable)		mm-dd-yyyy
	Resubmit with Government comments	e.g. 5 printed copies and 3 copies on CD-ROM	mm-dd-yyyy
2	Identify the specific deliverable	As applicable	mm-dd-yyyy
3	Identify the specific deliverable	As applicable	mm-dd-yyyy

Government-Furnished Property, Material, Equipment, or Information (GFP, GFM, GFE, or GFI)

This section should identify any government-furnished property provided to the contractor. This includes all government-furnished property, such as government-furnished material, equipment, or information. If the list of property is extensive, this section should identify where that list can be found. Before offering to provide any property, make sure that it will be available when required, where required, and in the condition required by the contract. Failure to meet government-furnished property requirements often lead to a contractor claim for an equitable adjustment to contract price, delivery, or other requirements. See FAR 45 and DOI policy for specific requirements about providing government-furnished property.

Security

This section should identify any unique security requirements associated with contract performance (when applicable). These requirements may include, but are not limited to, such items as:

- Special pass or identification requirements;
- Special security clearance requirements; or Special escort requirements.

Travel

Describe any travel requirements that are to be encountered in the performance of the service(s).

Special Material Requirements

Describe requirements for any special materials that are to be encountered in the performance of the service(s).

Other Unique Requirements

Discuss any other unique requirements or considerations.

Place of Performance

This section should identify where the contract will be performed. If performance will occur at multiple government locations, this section should indicate which tasks must be completed where. If performance will be at the contractor's facility, the SOW need only state that requirement.

Period of Performance

The period of performance may be stated using actual dates, days after contract award, or using some other method. If different periods of performance will apply to different tasks, the tasks and related periods of performance should be clearly identified.

SOW Language Tips:

A variety of people with different perspectives and life experiences will read your SOW. Readers typically include government and industry contracting personnel, managers, technical experts, accountants and lawyers. All these readers need to understand the SOW in a clear and concise manner; therefore, language selection is very important.

Below are tips that you should consider when reviewing the SOW:

- Use simple words, phrases, and sentences whenever practical.
- Be concise, precise, and consistent. Keep sentences short and to the point. Normally the longer the sentence, the harder it is to understand.
- Use verbs in the active voice. A verb is in the active voice when it expresses an action performed by its subject. For example, “The contractor shall report contract progress quarterly.” Conversely, avoid using verbs in the passive voice. A verb is in the passive voice when it expresses an action performed upon its subject or when the subject is the result of the action. For example, “Contract progress shall be reported quarterly by the contractor.”
- Use “shall” or “must” when writing a requirement binding on the contractor. Avoid “should” or “may” because they leave the decision on appropriate action up to the contractor.
- Use “will” to indicate actions by the Government.
- Be consistent when using terminology. Use the same word to mean the same thing throughout your SOW. Avoid using different words to indicate the same type of action.
- Avoid redundancy. At best, requiring the contractor to do the same thing in different parts of the SOW will add needless words to the SOW. At worst, there may be subtle differences in the requirements that may lead to a dispute during contract performance. Avoid vague or inexact phrases and generalizations.