Market Research Guide

Market research is your organized effort to learn whether a compliant domestic product exists that meets your technical needs at a reasonable cost and availability. Good research helps you comply in the first place and, when needed, supports a waiver request. Scale your effort to the size and complexity of the purchase.

Suggested market-research activities

1. Define the technical requirements and specifications the product must meet.
2. Identify potential domestic manufacturers and suppliers.
3. Contact at least three reliable domestic manufacturers or distributors.
4. Request quotes (price, quantity, lead time) from each source.
5. Ask each source where the product is manufactured and about domestic component content.
6. Review manufacturer catalogs, specification sheets, and product literature.
7. Search industry directories and databases (e.g. trade registries).
8. Contact relevant trade associations for lists of domestic producers.
9. Review federal or state purchasing schedules and cooperative contracts where relevant.
10. Check whether an existing general applicability waiver already covers the product.
11. Consider functionally equivalent domestic alternatives that meet the specification.
12. Consider design or schedule adjustments (lead time, resequencing) that avoid a waiver.
13. Document every contact: who, when, method, and result.
14. Retain all supporting materials (emails, quotes, screenshots) in the project file.

Best practices

- Start market research early — during design and pre-application — not after bids arrive.
- For nonavailability, show a genuine, documented search, not a bare assertion.
- For unreasonable cost, compare like-for-like products and measure the impact on total project cost against the 25% threshold, not the cost of a single item.
- Keep records organized and audit-ready; the documentation is the basis of any waiver.

For more Information, see the Grantee BABA Manual or the RSBA BABA Manual.