



VISA/BPA/CONTRACTING

This fact sheet addresses the advantages and disadvantages of the three major methods of procurement at the U.S. Army Environmental Hygiene Agency (USAEHA): VISA, Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA), and Contracting. The table on the back of this fact sheet gives a quick overview of these advantages and disadvantages.



VISA - The Government VISA is an authorized credit card used for the procurement of supplies and equipment. This is the fastest method of procurement, because placement and delivery of orders are handled locally. Orders are placed with the Directorate of Contracting, Aberdeen Proving Ground Support Activity (APGSA). The vendor then delivers your order directly to USAEHA's Logistics Division. However, the Government VISA has its limitations. The vendors involved must have all of the items on the order form, because partial shipments are not permissible. Therefore, if the vendor lacks only one of the ordered items, the order form will be returned. You then must reorder using a new order form.

Another limitation is the 30-day time frame for deliveries. The Logistics Division will cancel your request for any back-ordered items (those that cannot be supplied within 30 days). You must then initiate a new order form. Also, a separate purchase request is necessary when a vendor has to obtain an item from another company, and procurement will exceed 30 days. Like any credit card, the Government VISA has certain restrictions such as the \$2500 limit per transaction and splitting a purchase to avoid exceeding the \$2500 limit. There are also restrictions on the types of equipment and supplies that can be ordered with the VISA. These restrictions can be found in the Card Holder Instructions for the Use of U.S. Government Credit Cards.

BPA - The BPA is an agreement in which vendors will accept orders over the phone without a contract in place. Using BPA to procure equipment and supplies is faster than contracting but slower than using VISA. The BPA is useful when companies will not accept a Government VISA, and if they are on the BPA vendor list. However, there is a \$2500 limit per transaction, only small firms are awarded BPA contracts, and the list of vendors is limited. The suggested source (company/vendor you request) must be on the BPA vendor list, and items should be delivered within 45 days; this is not mandatory. Partial shipments are allowed. Restrictions for the use of BPA and VISA are the same. You can place a BPA order through the Logistics Division.

CONTRACTING - This is the slowest method of procurement. When contracting is used to procure equipment and supplies, APGSA handles the placement and delivery of orders. Each order arrives at APGSA Receiving before being sent to the Logistics Division. However, USAEHA controls the tracking of items ordered and, unlike VISA and BPA, there are few restrictions. Partial shipments are permissible, and there is no dollar limit on the cost or type of items ordered. You are not restricted to ordering only from small firms, and there are no time frames involved.

Contracting is reserved for the acquisition of supplies/services over \$25,000. This involves sealed bidding, employee competitive bids, public opening of bids, and negotiated actions using requests for proposals, requests for quotes, and unsolicited proposals and better contracts. Contracting is more complex than small purchases (less than \$25,000) thus causing it to be the slowest method of procurement.

REFERENCE: Card Holder Instructions for the Use of U.S. Government Credit Cards.

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- ◆ VISA
- ◆ Blanket Purchase Agreement
- ◆ Contracting

Table: Similarities and differences between VISA, BPA, and Contracting

	VISA	BPA	CONTRACTING
Vendor Requirements	◆ Must accept VISA	◆ Must be listed on the BPA vendor list	◆ None
Delivery Requirements	◆ 30 days	◆ 45 days but not mandatory	◆ None
Dollar Limit	◆ \$2500 per transaction	◆ \$2500 per transaction	◆ None
Authority	◆ Logistics Div or APGSA	◆ Logistics Div or APGSA	◆ APGSA
Restrictions	◆ Furniture, ADPE, carpet, copiers, explosives, gases, safety shoes, bldg materials, items in supply system	◆ Same as VISA	◆ None
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fastest method ◆ Logistics Div places orders ◆ Items shipped directly to USAEHA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Faster than contracting ◆ Logistics Div places orders ◆ May have back orders of more than 30 days ◆ May be used when companies will not accept VISA ◆ Items shipped to USAEHA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No dollar limit ◆ May order through any size firm ◆ No time limit ◆ Partial orders are accepted ◆ USAEHA controls tracking of items ◆ No restrictions
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$2500 limit per transaction ◆ Items must be delivered within 30 days ◆ Partial or back orders not accepted ◆ New order forms are required if one item is undeliverable ◆ Restrictions, only small firms can be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$2500 limit per transaction ◆ Restrictions, only small firms can be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No cost limit per transaction ◆ Slowest delivery time ◆ Orders are placed with APGSA ◆ Items are delivered to APGSA ◆ More steps are involved in ordering