

DFARS CHEAT SHEET

Quick-Reference Guide for Defense Contract Readiness

This cheat sheet highlights common DFARS risk areas, red flags, and readiness considerations. It is not exhaustive; it is designed to help businesses identify when deeper review is required.

1. Cybersecurity & Information Protection

Common DFARS Clauses:

- NIST SP 800-171 compliance
- Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) handling
- Incident reporting timelines

Readiness Questions:

- Do we know whether we handle CUI?
- Do we have documented cybersecurity controls?
- Do subcontractors touch sensitive data?

⚠️ Cyber obligations often flow down to subcontractors too.

2. Supply Chain & Sourcing Restrictions

Common Issues:

- Country-of-origin limitations
- Prohibited suppliers or components
- Domestic sourcing requirements

Readiness Questions:

- Do we know where materials, software, or components originate?
- Can we document sourcing if asked?

⚠️ Ignorance of sourcing is not a defense.

3. Flow-Down Requirements

DFARS clauses frequently:

- apply to subcontractors,
- require written agreements,
- mandate compliance tracking.

Readiness Questions:

- Do we pass clauses correctly?
 - Do we monitor subcontractor compliance?
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4. Reporting & Audit Exposure

Defense contracts may allow:

- government audits,
- documentation requests,
- performance reviews.

Readiness Questions:

- Are records organized and retrievable?
 - Are roles and responsibilities documented?
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5. Performance & Quality Expectations

Defense buyers often expect:

- precise delivery,
- documented quality controls,
- corrective action processes.

Readiness Questions:

- Can we demonstrate quality control?
 - Do we track performance issues formally?
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6. Common DFARS Missteps

1. Assuming DFARS applies only to primes
 2. Treating cybersecurity as an IT-only issue
 3. Ignoring subcontractor obligations
 4. Waiting until after award to assess compliance
 5. Overcommitting without internal controls
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7. When to Pause Before Proceeding

Pause and reassess if:

- DFARS clauses are unfamiliar
- Cyber or data requirements are unclear
- Subcontractors are not vetted
- Documentation is incomplete

Defense contracting rewards deliberate entry, not rushed bids.

Best Practice

Use DFARS as a go/no-go checkpoint, not a box to check after award.

Disclaimer: This cheat sheet is provided for planning purposes only and does not replace solicitation requirements, DFARS clauses, or legal counsel.