

Federal AI Hardware Vendor Evaluation Scorecard

A weighted rubric for comparing vendor proposals on more than price

Score each criterion 1 to 5, then multiply by the weight shown to get the weighted score. Total possible: 100 points. Weights reflect how often each factor causes real problems after award, not how often it comes up during the sales conversation. Adjust weights to match your program's actual risk profile before you start scoring.

Scoring guide: 5 = documented and verified. 4 = documented, not yet verified. 3 = asserted credibly, no documentation. 2 = vague or deflected. 1 = no response or a response that raises new concerns.

1. Workload Fit (25 points)

Criterion	Weight	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Vendor asked about the actual workload before proposing a configuration	5			
Proposed GPU memory matches the program's calculated VRAM requirement	5			
Interconnect architecture (PCIe vs. NVLink) justified against the stated workload	5			
Storage tier strategy matches real I/O patterns, not a default configuration	5			
Proposal accounts for the stated 3-5 year growth horizon	5			
Workload fit subtotal	25			

2. Compliance Documentation (25 points)

Criterion	Weight	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
TAA Manufacturer's Certificate of Compliance provided without repeated follow-up	5			
Country-of-origin documentation identifies substantial transformation, not just assembly	5			
Hardware security capabilities documented (TPM 2.0, secure boot, firmware integrity)	5			
Documentation sufficient to support the program's RMF control implementation	5			
Section 508 VPAT or Accessibility Conformance Report provided	5			
Compliance subtotal	25			

3. Total Cost Transparency (20 points)

Criterion	Weight	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Power consumption estimated at realistic sustained utilization, not idle or peak	5			
Cooling load provided in BTU/hr and checked against facility capacity	5			
Maintenance and support costs quoted for the full service life	5			
Vendor flagged cost drivers the program had not asked about	5			
Cost subtotal	20			

4. Delivery Realism (15 points)

Criterion	Weight	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Component-level lead times provided, not a single blended delivery estimate	5			
Allocation-constrained components identified proactively	5			
Qualified alternatives offered where specification flexibility could shorten timeline	5			
Delivery subtotal	15			

5. Vendor Capability (15 points)

Criterion	Weight	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Manufacturing quality certification documented (e.g., ISO 9001)	5			
Factory acceptance testing offered against the program's workload profile	5			
Past performance on comparable federal contracts verifiable	5			
Capability subtotal	15			

Total Score

Category	Max	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
Workload fit	25			
Compliance documentation	25			
Total cost transparency	20			
Delivery realism	15			
Vendor capability	15			
TOTAL	100			

Reading the Results

A vendor scoring 80 or above has generally done the work: they understood the requirement, documented their claims, and surfaced constraints before being asked. Between 60 and 79 usually means a capable vendor who needs follow-up on specific gaps, worth pursuing with targeted questions rather than eliminating. Below 60, the pattern is almost always the same: the proposal was assembled from a catalog rather than built against the requirement.

Two scoring patterns are worth more attention than the total. A vendor strong on cost and delivery but weak on compliance documentation tends to create problems during assessment, months after award. A vendor strong everywhere except workload fit is often proposing what they have in stock rather than what the program needs, which is the single most expensive mismatch to discover after delivery.

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