

AS9100 vs. ISO 9001: What Aerospace Buyers Should Look for in a Bearing Distributor

Samantha Scroggins | July 28, 2026



In aerospace procurement, supplier selection extends well beyond product availability and pricing. Documentation controls, product traceability, supplier oversight, and regulatory obligations all play an important role in maintaining product integrity throughout the supply chain. For procurement teams sourcing bearings and related components, quality certifications provide valuable insight into how a distributor manages risk, processes, supplier relationships, and operational oversight.

Two certifications frequently reviewed during supplier evaluations are ISO 9001 and AS9100. While both focus on quality management and continual improvement, they serve different purposes and address different industry needs. Understanding these distinctions helps procurement teams identify distribution partners capable of meeting the demands of flight-critical and defense programs.

IBSCO maintains ISO 9001:2015, AS9100:2016, and AS9120:2016 certifications, helping customers across aerospace, aviation, defense, medical, industrial manufacturing, and other precision-driven industries navigate complex sourcing with confidence.

What Is ISO 9001?

ISO 9001 is an internationally recognized quality management framework designed to help organizations establish documented processes, improve operational performance, and enhance customer satisfaction. The standard provides a framework for process control, risk-based decision-making, continual improvement,

customer focus, document management, and performance evaluation.

Organizations across a wide range of industries use ISO 9001 to demonstrate their commitment to documented procedures and effective operational practices. For many companies, it serves as the foundation of their quality management system.

What Is AS9100?

AS9100 builds on the ISO 9001 framework by introducing additional controls specifically for the flight-critical aviation and defense industries. These supplementary controls address critical areas of these supply chains, including product traceability, configuration management, supplier oversight, product safety, counterfeit parts prevention, regulatory compliance, risk management, and documentation oversight.

AS9100 was developed to address the unique operational demands of aerospace manufacturing and defense programs where accountability, verification, and documented oversight are essential throughout the supply chain. Organizations certified to AS9100 must comply with both ISO 9001 standards and the additional industry-specific criteria established within the AS9100 framework.

Where AS9120 Fits In

While AS9100 is commonly associated with aerospace manufacturers, AS9120 was developed specifically for aerospace distributors and stockists. AS9120 incorporates the principles of AS9100 while emphasizing activities unique to distribution operations, including product handling, storage, inventory control, documentation accuracy, supplier accountability, and product verification.

For procurement teams evaluating bearing distributors, AS9120 demonstrates that the organization maintains documented oversight specifically designed for the storage, handling, and distribution of flight-worthy products. Because distributors serve as a critical link between manufacturers and end users, AS9120 helps establish confidence that appropriate oversight remains in place from receipt through final delivery.

Understanding the Differences

ISO 9001, AS9100, and AS9120 share a common foundation, but each serves a distinct purpose. ISO 9001 establishes the framework for a quality management system and continual improvement process. AS9100 expands that framework with industry-specific oversight focused on manufacturing, product safety, risk mitigation, and regulatory compliance.

AS9120 applies those industry-focused principles to distribution operations, emphasizing inventory control, documentation accuracy, verification, supplier management, and product handling procedures. For procurement teams, these distinctions provide valuable insight into how a supplier manages products, processes, and accountability throughout the supply chain.

Why Aerospace Buyers Should Pay Attention

A bearing distributor becomes an important extension of the aerospace supply chain. The distributor's ability to maintain accurate documentation, ensure supplier oversight, verify product authenticity, and maintain verification records directly affects procurement efficiency and program compliance.

Evaluating quality certifications helps buyers understand how a distributor manages product traceability, supplier qualification, document oversight, risk reduction, regulatory obligations, counterfeit prevention, corrective action procedures, and product authenticity verification. These capabilities help reduce sourcing risk, improve visibility, and strengthen accountability throughout the procurement process.

What to Look for Beyond Certifications

Quality certifications provide valuable insight into a distributor's systems and procedures, but they represent only one part of the supplier evaluation process. Procurement teams should also consider factory-authorized manufacturer relationships, verification capabilities, documentation support, flight-critical industry experience, supplier network strength, inventory programs, counterfeit prevention processes, and product knowledge and application expertise.

Together, these factors provide a clearer understanding of a distributor's ability to meet sourcing objectives throughout a program's life.

The Importance of Product Verification

Verification remains one of the most important considerations in aerospace and aviation procurement. The ability to track products throughout the supply chain supports regulatory compliance, accurate documentation, quality assurance activities, and risk management efforts. A qualified distributor should maintain processes that support material verification, lot tracking, manufacturer certifications, inspection documentation, certificate management, and product authentication.

These oversight mechanisms help verify that products are sourced, documented, and distributed in accordance with established program standards.

Supporting Flight-Related Procurement Objectives

Procurement teams often manage long program lifecycles, extensive documentation expectations, evolving supply chain conditions, and strict compliance requirements. Working with distributors that maintain flight focused certifications provides access to established oversight, documented procedures, and supplier management measures designed for highly regulated environments.

For many organizations, supplier qualification includes evaluating certifications, verification practices, document oversight, manufacturer relationships, and overall operational capabilities before products are approved for procurement.

Quality and Distribution Support from IBSCO

IBSCO maintains ISO 9001:2015, AS9100:2016, and AS9120:2016 registrations to support customers operating in flight-critical, defense, and other highly regulated industries. Our quality systems include product verification, document control, supplier oversight, risk management practices, and continual improvement initiatives aligned with aerospace and defense requirements.

As a factory-authorized distributor for leading bearing manufacturers, including NHBB, NMB, Myonic, and RBC, IBSCO provides access to precision components while supporting customers with documentation assistance, sourcing expertise, inventory programs, and dependable supply chain solutions. With more than

40 years of industry experience and Class 6 Cleanroom capabilities, IBSCO helps procurement teams meet the most demanding quality and compliance objectives.

Looking for a bearing distributor that understands our aerospace and aviation quality standards and can support your sourcing objectives throughout your program lifecycle?

Connect with the IBSCO team to discuss your sourcing goals, documentation requirements, verification expectations, and supplier qualification criteria.

Source: <https://www.ibsco.com/as9100-vs-iso-9001-what-aerospace-buyers-should-look-for-in-a-bearing-distributor/>