

## Solicitation In a Nutshell

- ◆ The contract specialist begins to develop the solicitation document once market research & acquisition planning are completed.
- ◆ The contract specialist determines which type of solicitation is best suited for the requirement and includes any corresponding small business considerations.
- ◆ Once the solicitation has been thoroughly reviewed and approved, it is released.
- ◆ After the solicitation is released, prospective offerors may provide feedback or ask questions through an assigned contracting office point of contact.
- ◆ Answers to offeror questions, and clarification or changes/additions to the solicitation are publicized through amendments.
- ◆ Once bids/proposals have been received, they are evaluated.
- ◆ Technical aspects of each bid/proposal are evaluated to ensure best value to the Government is provided.

# Understanding FEDERAL ACQUISITIONS

## Solicitation

After **market research & acquisition planning** are completed and all required documentation is available and approved, the contract specialist will develop the **solicitation** document. Once the **solicitation** is released, bids or proposals from prospective offerors are collected and evaluated for award.



### Who We Are

The Acquisition Services Directorate (AQD), a Federal shared-service provider within the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Business Center (NBC), offers acquisition support to all Federal agencies. We help managers in both civilian and military organizations fulfill their missions by crafting appropriate procurement solutions.

As an ISO 9001 certified Federal entity, we use proven business practices while delivering cost-effective contracts. Our Contracting Officers will handle the complete acquisition lifecycle, utilizing innovative technology and value-added benefits.

### How We Can Help You

We will handle your acquisitions from project inception through closeout; serving you efficiently, quickly and professionally.

We monitor contracts to ensure compliance with Federal regulations and agency-specific rules.

Contact us today and we'll partner with you to fulfill your acquisition needs.

### Where We Are

On the web at [www.aqd.nbc.gov](http://www.aqd.nbc.gov); via email to [acquisition@aqd.nbc.gov](mailto:acquisition@aqd.nbc.gov); or by phone at 703.964.8800.





A **solicitation** is any request to submit offers or quotes to the Government for the purpose of acquiring products and services. Contracting officials prepare a **solicitation** that fully describes and specifies what it wants to purchase, the terms and conditions of the purchase, delivery schedules, and support needed for the product or service. All acquisitions are competed to the maximum extent practicable. However, it is generally during this preparation time that the Government determines if a sole source acquisition will be necessary.

## Types of Solicitations

There are different terms to describe specific **types of solicitations**.

The type of solicitation that will be created for your acquisition will depend on the acquisition strategy. For example, a solicitation for an order against an existing contract is slightly different than a solicitation for a purchase order.

However, all solicitations have the same two essential purposes: (1) describe to vendors what the Government needs to purchase and (2) communicate to vendors how the acquisition process will be conducted.

## Small Business Considerations

The Small Business Administration (SBA) requires Federal agencies to set annual goals where a certain percentage of procurements are awarded to small businesses.

Several **small business** designations highlight socio-economic categories and give program managers and contracting officials an opportunity to use “set-aside” procedures.

Small Business, Women-owned, HUBZone, Veteran, and Service-Disabled Veteran owned firms can each receive set-asides. The 8(a) firms can receive sole source awards up to a specific dollar threshold.

## Publicizing a Solicitation

Once the solicitation document has gone through all necessary levels of approval, it is ready to be publicized.

Contracting offices have a number of ways to publicize their solicitations depending on the type of acquisition procedure (set-aside, full and open, GSA schedule, etc). Typically, a solicitation is posted to the Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) website, which acts as the government-wide point of entry for any acquisition over \$25,000 in value. Other websites, such as GSA's eBuy portal, cater specifically to acquisitions posted for pre-selected GSA Schedule offerors to access.

## Responding to Vendor Inquiries

If a prospective offeror requests further information that if provided would provide them an unfair competitive advantage, then that information must be released publicly to all other prospective offerors. In order to provide information on a fair basis, answers to offerors' questions are typically released via an amendment.

## Amendments

Solicitations are frequently amended to provide clarification and/or changes to the solicitation document. They can include such changes as new or expanded requirements being added and/or clarification on previously unclear portions of the solicitation. **Amendments** may also be released to include offeror questions and answers or to extend the due date for responses. Thorough planning and review of solicitation documents prior to release can greatly help minimize instances where **amendments** may be needed.

## Bid/Proposal Evaluation

Once bids/proposals have been received, they are evaluated against the criteria established in the solicitation. Proposals are typically evaluated against three main criteria: technical, price, and past performance. The goal is to make an award that represents the best value to the Government.

## Technical Evaluation Panel

The **Technical Evaluation Panel** (TEP) reviews and evaluates areas of the proposal that are technical in nature. Members of the **Technical Evaluation Panel** should collectively provide the needed knowledge and expertise to properly evaluate and make recommendations as needed. To ensure consistency, it is ideal to keep the same TEP members throughout the evaluation and selection process.

## Contents of a Solicitation

- Solicitation/Contract Form
- Products or Services and Prices/Costs
- Description/Requirements Documents
- Packaging and Marking
- Inspection and Acceptance
- Deliverables or Performance
- Contract Administration Data
- Special Contract Requirements
- Contract Clauses
- List of Attachments
- Representations, Certifications, and Other Statements of Offers or Respondents
- Instructions, Conditions, and Notices to Offerors or Respondents
- Evaluation Factors for Award