



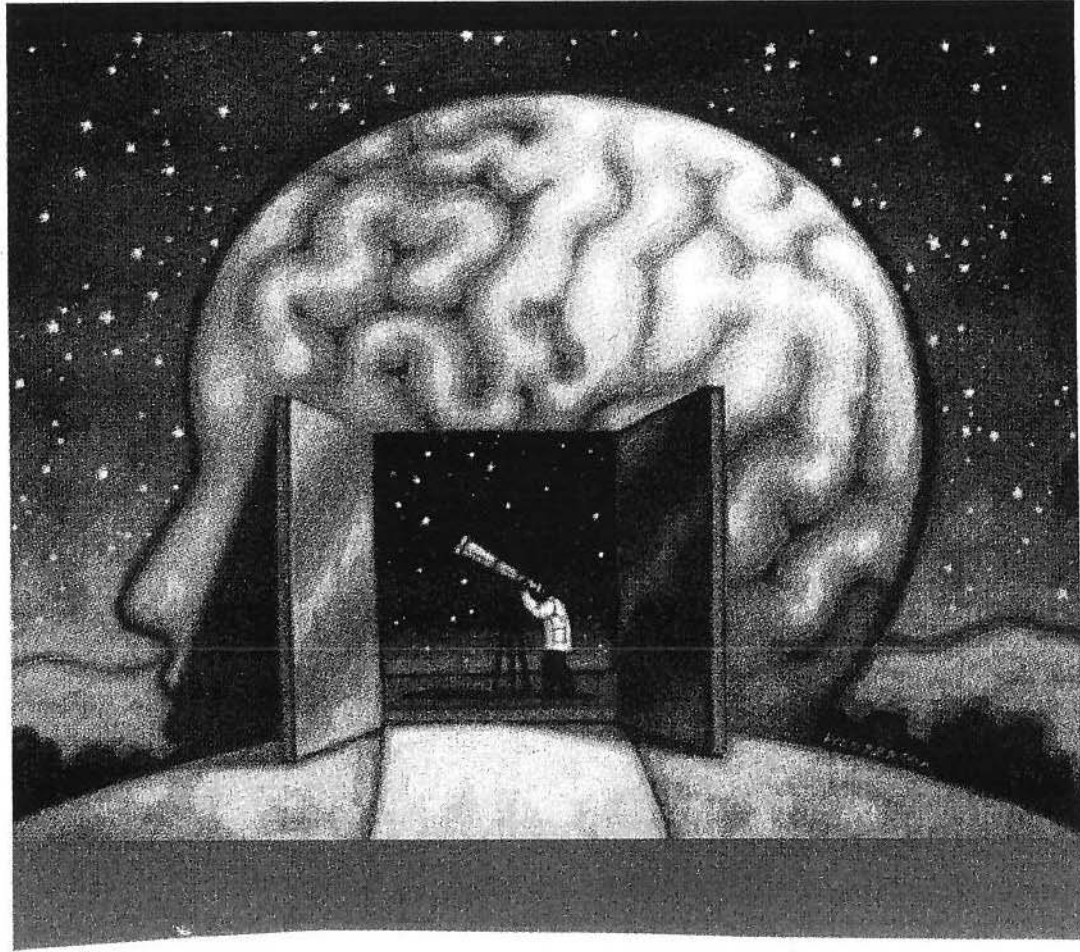
U.S. Army Contracting Command



NDIA Materiel Enterprise Small Business Conference

Pamela Monroe, Associate Director
Office of Small Business Programs
November 16, 2011







AGENDA

- Understanding the Solicitation
 - Solicitation Types
 - Solicitation Contents
 - Statement of Work
 - Submission Requirements
 - Evaluation Criteria

- Proposal Preparation
 - Basics
 - Critical Advice
 - Final Advice



Small Business Specialist

Primary Responsibilities:

- Administer programs to locate small businesses for current and future procurements
- Coordinate inquiries and requests for advice from small businesses about procurement issues
- Ensure that small businesses receive adequate consideration prior to the issuance of solicitations and contract modifications
- Provide set aside recommendations
- Participate in acquisition planning



Small Business Specialist

- Work with procurement and technical personnel to ensure adequate specifications and drawings are available for business participation
- Review requirements for possible break out items suitable for small business acquisitions
- Provide advice to small businesses
- Participate in the evaluation of small business participation plans and subcontracting plans



Small Business Specialist

Primary Responsibilities (cont'd)

- Ensure that small business subcontract reporting requirements are met
- Act as liaison between Contracting Officers and SBA representatives
- Provide information to Contracting Officers about technical capabilities of small businesses
- Advise contracting personnel of new small business programs and/or initiatives



Small Business Specialist Responsibilities

Small Businesses can expect the Office of Small Business Programs will:

- Be exceptionally candid as to whether the capabilities of the small business match the agency's needs.
- Not give false hope, vague or generic information
- Treat all small businesses the same, providing pertinent procurement information, and not show special preference to a network of friends or acquaintances.
- Provide information on the agency's latest acquisitions-related initiatives.



Small Business Specialist Responsibilities

Small Businesses Specialist cannot:

- Lobby source selection officials to select a specific small business
- Promise anyone a contract
- Provide government-proprietary information
- Help small businesses write/review proposals to be submitted to the agency or any other government agency
- Supersede the authority of the contracting officer
- Revise the NAICS when you exceed the \$7m size standard



Marketing Strategy

- There is a Small Business Specialist (SBS) assigned to each contracting activity.
- They are your FIRST and primary point of contact.
- They will help you target your marketing effort by identifying your real customers, the folks with the requirements AND the money.
- The SBS is also the person who reviews all Army requirements and has a key role in deciding if a requirement is set aside for small business wither sole source or competitive.



MARKETING STRATEGY

- Know your product/service. Be honest. Don't tell your potential customer that you can do something unless you can really do it.
- Learn what each customer needs. Be specific, and tailor your presentation to that specific customer.
- Target those Army Activities that are most likely to need your product/service.
- If you are an 8(a), HUBZone, Service-Disabled Veteran, or otherwise eligible for one of the set-aside programs, then you **MUST** go visit the SBS and let them know who you are and what you can do.



Business Cards

- First Impression of your business
 - Who you are
 - What you sell
 - What's your qualifications
 - Logos (Veteran-Owned Business)

- Make it clear what your business does (light blubs, computers, rugs, IT, etc)

- Ensure the contact and website information is still correct

- Make use of the back of the card
 - NAICS codes
 - GWAC Information

- Keep them clean and neat!





Market Research

Sources Sought are required on acquisitions before posting a solicitation as full and open

Unless market research was conducted within one year

Documentation is needed to substantiate that due diligence was conducted to look for small businesses



Sources Sought

This sources sought announcement is for information and planning purposes only; it is not to be construed as a commitment by the Government. A contract may not be awarded as a result of this sources sought announcement. The US Army Contracting Command- National Capital Region at Hoffman II, on behalf of **(insert who the requirement is in support of)**, intends to procure **(insert service)** using small business set-aside procedures in accordance with FAR Part 19 or under full and open competitive procedures. If at least two small business concerns are determined by the Government to be capable of performing this requirement based on the evaluation of the capability packages submitted by **(time and date)**, the requirement will be solicited as a 100% set-aside for small business concerns in accordance with FAR Part 19. If capability packages are not received from at least two responsible small business concerns in accordance with FAR Part 19 by the response date or if the Government determines that no small business concerns in accordance with FAR Part 19 are capable of performing this requirement based upon an evaluation of the capability packages submitted; this requirement will be solicited under full and open competitive procedures.

Only small businesses are to submit capability packages. Interested small business concerns in NAICS code **(insert appropriate code)** with a size standard of **(insert number of employees or dollar amount)** are encouraged to submit their capability packages. **The capability packages for this sources sought market survey are not expected to be proposals, but rather statements regarding the company's existing experience in relation to the areas specified in the PWS.** Capability packages must not exceed **(insert the total number of pages)** and must be submitted electronically. All contractor questions must be submitted no later than **(time (EST) and date)**.



Sources Sought

Small business concerns are to outline their experiences in the following **(insert no more than five key areas OR tasks from the customer that is specific to the requirement in determining small business capability)**. Areas or tasks where a contractor does not have prior experience should be annotated as such.

****NOTE: The following questions can also be inserted at the KO's discretion as follows:** In addition, the following questions must be answered and elaborated on as part of the package: (1) Financial Capability-Does your firm have the financial capability to withstand a negative cash flow of **(insert dollar amount (\$))** per month? (*see note below); (2) Past Performance-Does your firm have the relevant past performance within the last three years? (include contract numbers, contract type, dollar value of each procurement, point of contracts, and brief description of the work performed); (3) Corporate Experience-Does your firm have the work experience similar in nature, scope, complexity, and difficulty of work in the PWS?

To assist us in maintaining a list of interested small business concerns for this potential procurement, please provide your company's name, point of contact (POC), address, phone number, and business size under the above NAICS code to **(insert name of contract specialist as the POC)** for this procurement. A/An **(insert type of contract)** is anticipated. The anticipated period of performance will be **(insert the period of performance)**. The place of performance will be **(insert location)**. Contractor personnel **(will or will not)** require a current **(secret or top secret)** clearance.

A written Request for Proposal (RFP) will be posted on or about **(insert date RFP will be posted)**. The RFP must be retrieved and downloaded from CCE's homepage at: http://cce.hqda.pentagon.mil/rfp/rfp_1.asp. Select the desired RFP and click on the "Process" button. No hard copies of the RFP will be issued. All amendments will be posted and must be retrieved from this website. Responses to the RFP must be submitted by email to the POC identified below. No solicitation mailing list will be compiled. Contractors are responsible for all costs for submitting their capability packages. POC is **(insert name of contract specialist)**, at **(insert phone number or e-mail address)** or **(insert Contract Officer's name)**, at **(insert phone number or e-mail address)**.

****To determine the dollar amount for financial capability to withstand a negative cash flow:**

Contracts: Estimated value of the contract divided by 12 = monthly dollar amount

IDIQ: Projected Estimated annual value of all task orders divided by 12 = monthly dollar amount



Pre-Award

- **Market Research is performed in accordance with FAR Part 10 to determine small business capabilities to set a requirement aside for small business**

Sources Sought or Market Survey Language

- **Sources Sought/Market surveys are posted on the Federal Business Opportunities web site**
- **Firm's capability statement should be as complete a package as possible**
 - *Specify services/products that can be provided
 - *Include your resource capabilities as well
- **Capability package should demonstrate firm's ability to perform the specific task/s that are being requested in the Performance Work Statement**
- **Include secret or top secret clearance requirement**
- **It is the responsibility of the CONTRACTOR to query the FEDBIZ OPPS, not many contracting agencies keep a bidder's mailing list.**



Pre-Award

- A determination is made whether to set the requirement as a:
 - *small business set-aside (allows award exclusively to small businesses)
 - *partial small business set aside (requirement is divisible into two or more lots, where one or more small businesses are eligible)
- Consideration is given whether to set the requirement aside within one of the socio-economic programs, i.e. HUBZone; Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned; <\$4m 8(a) sole source or sole source to an Alaskan Native Corporation (IAW) FAR 19.805-1; 13 C.F.R 124)
- NEW: Women-Owned Small Businesses

(There are no set-asides for small disadvantaged businesses and Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Institutions)



Responding to Sources Sought

- Read the sources sought carefully and respond to each question asked
- Demonstrate your greatest strengths, such as your management approaches/processes
 - This may make your capability package stand out
- Do not submit generic capability packages or answers
 - Pre-printed brochures, etc. may not include everything that was requested and are typically not desired or requested
 - Tailor the information in your package to meet the requirements in the sources sought
 - Do not simply repeat the PWS
 - Explain (within the page limitations) your unique skills, approach, and/or expertise and how you have been successful in the past as a result on similar projects
 - Builds the Government's confidence in your ability to perform
 - Merely stating that you will meet the requirements of the contract does not build confidence
 - Explain the merits and benefits of your approach, design, etc.
 - Brings out the strengths in your capability package, this may provide a basis for a higher evaluation rating



Market Research

- FEDBIZ OPPTS

- When writing Sources Sought or Market Survey Language:
 - “...seeking capabilities from to determine levels of competition and subcontract goals”
 - “Firm’s capability statement should be as complete a package as possible”
 - “Specify services/products that can be provided”
 - “Include your resource capabilities as well”
 - “Capability package should demonstrate firm’s ability to perform the specific task/s that are being requested in the Performance Work Statement
 - Include secret or top secret clearance requirement



Market Research

- Request for Proposal on FedBizOpps: www.fbo.gov/
- Be Sure to Include the Following:
 - Performance Work Statement/Statement of Work
http://cce.hqda.pentagon.mil/rfp/rfp_1.asp
 - Inclusion of secret or top secret clearance requirements
 - Proposal Drop-Off Address or Email address
 - All the vendors may not be familiar with the Washington Metropolitan Area or the Pentagon



Market Research

Sources Sought Questions

Purpose: To convey to customers that small businesses can satisfy the requirements

- Limit questions to no more than five
- Questions must not be too restrictive so only the incumbent would satisfy the requirement
- Questions must be detailed and relevant to the requirement
- Performance Work Statement



Market Research

Reviewing Capability Packages

Customer:

- Reviews the packages submitted by the small business contractors
- Only review and evaluate the questions contained in the sources sought
- If there are at least two small businesses that are capable of performing the requirement, the requirement can be set -aside for small businesses
- If there are no small businesses that are capable, the customer must provide in writing why the companies are not capable



Market Research

- The small business office also reviews the capability packages.
- In the event, there is a difference of opinion, the customer, the small business office and contracting officer shall meet to review and discuss the capability packages to come to a consensus.
- The Small Business Administration (SBA) Procurement Center Representative (PCR) only reviews packages if the requirement has been determined to be solicited as full and open

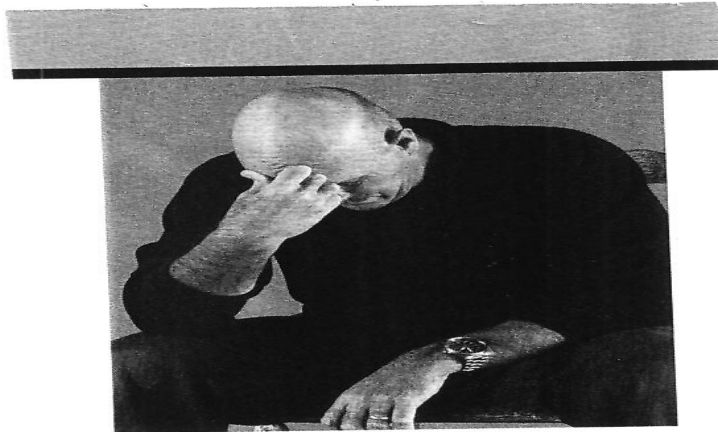


Questions





U.S. Army Contracting Command





Competitive Proposals

- **Understanding the Solicitation**



- **Solicitations**
- **Requests for Quotations (RFQs)**

- **Used in Simplified Acquisition Procedures**
 - Supplies and Services not to exceed \$150,000 or Commercial Items not to exceed \$6.5 million
 - Price and other factors (e.g. past performance) may be considered
 - Typically used for ordering supplies, equipment or services from procurement vehicles or catalogues such as GSA Schedules
 - Requirements must be described clearly, accurately, and completely
 - Typically evaluated without discussions

- **Legal Terms**
 - A quotation is not an offer; Government acceptance does not form a binding contract
 - An order from the Government is the offer (to buy); if the contractor accepts the order in writing or by action (ships/performs), a binding contract is formed



Solicitations

- **Solicitations**
- **Requests for Quotations (RFQs)**

- **Used to Evaluate an Offeror's Ability to Perform**
 - **--Past Performance**
 - **Availability of Sufficient Resources**
 - **-- Financial Health**
 - **-- Corporate Structure**

- **Typical Uses**
 - **Market Research**
 - **Phase I of a Two-Phased Acquisition**
 - **Two Phased Design-Build Competitions (FAR 36.3)**
 - **Selection of a limited number of offerors from Phase I allowed to compete in Phase II**
 - **Multi-step Competition (FAR 15.202)**
 - **Identification of offerors who are most likely to be successful in the competition based on past performance/experience**
 - **Offerors are not "eliminated" but are advised if they are a viable competitor**



Solicitations

- Requests for Proposals (RFPs)
- Used in “Negotiated” Procurements
 - Used to communicate Government requirements to prospective contractors and to solicit proposals
 - Proposals constitute a legally binding offer that may become a contract if selected
 - Standard format prescribed by FAR 15.204-1 – Uniform Contract Format
 - The RFP is a model of the resulting contract, containing all applicable terms, conditions and requirements
 - The RFP less Instructions to Offerors and Evaluation Factors become the contract (Representations and Certifications are in by reference)
 - Price and other factors (e.g. Past Performance, Technical Approach, Management Approach) are considered
 - The basis for award may vary
 - Best Value
 - Technically Acceptable/Low Offer
 - Evaluations may involve discussions and proposal revisions
 - Discussions are exchanges between the Government and offerors for the purpose of identifying to the offeror significant weaknesses, deficiencies, and other aspects of its proposal that could, in the opinion of the contracting officer, be altered or explained to enhance materially the proposal's potential for award.



Solicitations

- **Important Solicitation Contents**

- Performance Work Statement

- Statement of Objectives (SOO)

- Statement of Work (SOW)

- Section C of the solicitation provides the scope of the contract:

- Performance requirements

- Tells what is needed or required, not how to do it

- Specific tasks

- Specifications

- Deliverables

- Metrics

- Government prefers to use performance requirements vice prescriptive tasking



Solicitations

- **Important Solicitation Contents**
- **Submission Requirements**

- **Section L of the solicitation contains the Proposal Instructions:**
 - Submission date and location**
 - Proposals not submitted by the time and date located will be rejected unless it is the only offer received and determined to be in the best interest of the Government**
 - Proposal format instructions**
 - **Font**
 - **Page sizes**
 - **Page limitations**
 - **--If Oral Presentations will be conducted and associated instructions**
 - **--Proposal content requirements**
 - **Past Performance**
 - **Technical and Management Factors**
 - **Cost/Price**
 - **Subcontracting Plan / Small Business Participation Plan**

- **When in doubt about the instructions: ASK QUESTIONS Prior to closing date**
- **Important Solicitation Contents**
- **Submission Requirements**



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Proposal Preparation



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Proposal Preparation The Basics

Read the solicitation thoroughly

- ✓ --Make sure you understand all of the terms, conditions, and requirements and can meet those requirements

When in doubt about the instructions: ASK QUESTIONS IN WRITING!

- ✓ --If you do not agree with the approach taken in the solicitation, you must make your point before the proposal due date and time
- ✓ --Protests on the basis of alleged improprieties in a solicitation must be filed before the bid opening or the closing date for receipt of proposals or they will be considered untimely and may be rejected

Submit the proposal on time

- ✓ --Except under unique circumstances, late proposals can not be accepted by the Government
- ✓ --Understand the limitations at FAR 15.208

Do not exceed the page limitations set by the solicitation

- ✓ --Excess pages will be removed and not evaluated
- ✓ --You will be hurting your chances for award as important information may be excluded from the evaluation and result in poor ratings



Proposal Preparation Critical Advice

Even if the solicitation states that the Government reserves the right to award without discussions, submit your best offer the first time

- Do not assume you will get a chance to correct weaknesses and deficiencies or submit a more competitive price
 - The Government may elect to proceed without discussions
 - You may be eliminated from the Competitive Range and not get that second chance!

Provide what is requested in the format specified:

- Adding additional information beyond what is requested will not benefit you
- The evaluators must stick to the evaluation criteria
- You will actually be hindering the evaluation process
- Following the requested format makes the evaluators' job much easier
- Also provides an indication of your ability to be responsive and desire to win the contract

Not submitting information requested will hurt you

- Evaluators are only allowed to evaluate what is in the proposal
- Do not assume that the Government will give you "credit" for what we may already know of your technical/management expertise
- It is your responsibility to submit the information needed for the evaluation



Proposal Preparation Critical Advice

Pick a theme for your proposal based on your greatest strengths, such as your management approaches/processes

- Apply that theme consistently throughout your proposal– even in your cover letter.
 - This may make your proposal stand out

Do not submit generic proposals or answers

- Pre-printed brochures, etc. may not include everything that was requested and are typically not desired or requested
- Tailor the information in your proposal to meet the requirements of that solicitation
- Do not just copy a previous proposal submitted for a similar requirement
 - If you do – at least change the project name!

Do not simply repeat the RFP

- Explain (within the page limitations) your unique skills, approach, and/or expertise and how you have been successful in the past as a result on similar projects
 - Builds the Government's confidence in your ability to perform
 - Especially important if evaluation will include Confidence or Risk ratings
 - Merely stating that you will meet the requirements of the contract does not build confidence
- Explain the merits and benefits of your approach, design, etc.
 - Brings out the strengths in your proposal and may provide a basis for higher ratings



Proposal Preparation Critical Advice

Provide good past performance reference information

- Verify POCs and phone numbers
- Identify the person most knowledgeable about that project; Not the person with the most impressive title
- Let the POC know that they may be called for project performance information
- Understand what the POC will say about you
- Verify your past performance with your customer/reference

Be honest about your past performance

- Do not embellish on your previous performance
- Evaluators may contact previous customers for their feedback and to verify the project scope and your performance

Approach instances of adverse past performance proactively

- The Government knows and does not expect that every project or Contractor is perfect
- Explain what you did to systematically correct problems or deficient performance and how you will ensure that this will not be a recurring problem

Mitigate the Government's concerns



Proposal Preparation Critical Advice

If discussions are used:

- Understand what the Government's obligations are during discussions
 - Disclosure of significant weaknesses and deficiencies
 - The Government is not required to discuss every area where the proposal could be improved
- Understand what you need to do in your Final Proposal Revision (FPR)
 - Correct the deficiencies and significant weaknesses
 - Recognize that these are items that the evaluation team is telling you are a problem (and therefore hurting your chances for award)
 - Do not expect the Government to tell you how to fix your proposal
 - Do not introduce new information beyond the content of the discussions
 - The process can not handle surprises, and a second round of discussions is not likely!
- Responses to issues covered during discussions must be included in the FPR to be considered in the final evaluation



Proposal Preparation Final Advice

Re-read the Solicitation

- Make sure you submitted everything that was requested, within the page limits and in the format required

Make sure your proposal is consistent

- If you say you use a standard approach in one section, stay with that approach throughout your Proposal
- Avoid conflicts within your proposal

You are responsible for the quality of your proposal

- Make a check list of everything required to be submitted
 - Check everything off
- Better yet – make a cross reference checklist between Sections C, L, and M
 - Ensure that your proposal
 - addresses the requirements in Section L
 - can be evaluated under the criteria in Section M, and
 - elaborates on your ability to meet the requirements being evaluated
- Your proposal if selected will become binding – quality counts

Following contract selection/award

- Request a debriefing whether successful or unsuccessful
 - This is an opportunity to learn how to be more competitive and submit a better proposal



Steps in the Proposal Process

Review
Solicitation
PWS
SOO
SOW

Review
Evaluation
Criteria

Review
Submission
Requirements

Prepare and
Review
Proposal





U.S. Army Contracting Command



A Message from the Contracting Officers

Common Mistakes with Proposals



U.S. Army Contracting Command



ILLUSTRATION BY KENDALL ENDO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



COMMON MISTAKES WITH PROPOSALS

- Missing Deadlines (i.e question, submission of proposals)
- Not following Instructions
- Not tracking Amendments
- Not reading instructions in the Performance Work Statement(i.e. submission of resumes, spreadsheets)
- Not addressing evaluation criteria in sections L & M may result in the proposal not being evaluated
- The Small Business Participation Plan and Subcontracting Plan are two separate and distinct requirements
- Not reading and understanding other sections i.e. H and J



Small Business Participation Plan

- Level of commitment to Small Business using the following criteria:
 - Extent to which such firms are specifically identified in the proposals
 - Extent of commitment to use such firms
 - Complexity and variety of the work small firms are to perform
 - Realism of the proposal
 - Extent of participation of such firms in terms of the value of the total Acquisition
 - Past Subcontracting performance
 - Extent to which the offeror provides detailed explanations/documentation supporting the proposed participation percentages or lack thereof



Small Business Participation Plan

Goals

- Small Business 23%
 - Small Disadvantaged Business 5%
 - Woman-owned Small Business 5%
 - Hubzone Small Business 3%
 - Veteran-owned Small Business 3%
 - Service-Disabled Veteran-owned Small Business 3%
 - NOTE: The goals listed above are examples and may change per solicitation



Evaluations

OUTSTANDING

Demonstrates a highly feasible approach in exceeding most and meeting all other small business goals set forth in the solicitation or provides an extensive explanation as to why certain goals cannot be achieved. The offerors' prior subcontracting performance, current initiatives to promote small business opportunities, and existing commitments with small business concerns, reflect an overall low degree of risk in meeting its proposed SBPP goals.

GOOD

Demonstrates a feasible approach in exceeding some and meeting all other small business goals set forth in the solicitation or provides an adequate explanation as to why certain goals cannot be achieved. The offerors' prior subcontracting performance, current initiatives to promote small business opportunities, and existing commitments with small business concerns, reflect an overall low to moderate degree of risk in meeting its proposed SBPP goals.

ACCEPTABLE

Demonstrates a minimally feasible approach in meeting the small business goals set forth in the solicitation or provides a minimal explanation as to why certain goals cannot be achieved. The offerors' prior subcontracting performance, current initiatives to promote small business opportunities, and existing commitments with small business concerns, reflect an overall moderate to high degree of risk in meeting its proposed SBPP goals.

UNACCEPTABLE

Plan cannot reasonably be expected to meet the small business goals set forth in the solicitation and fails to provide at least a minimal explanation as to why certain goals cannot be achieved.



Subcontracting versus SB Participation

Percentage of **Subcontracted Dollars** to Small Businesses 20%

- ❑ \$1,000,000 (subcontracting 10% equaling \$100,000)

SBs get 20% of the \$100,000 = **\$20,000**

SB Participation Goal - Total Percentage of **Contract Value** 20%

- ❑ \$1,000,000 (subcontracting 20% equaling \$200,000)

SBs get 20% of total value = **\$200,000**





QUESTIONS?



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When In Doubt?

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