

Questions and Answers Concerning the Call Center Request for Proposals
Solicitation TIB-2008-R-001

The following questions have been posed by potential offerors after their review of the Request for Proposal. They have been compiled into four categories: (1) Minimum Technical Requirements, (2) Program Questions; (3) Technical Questions; and (4) Business and Administrative Questions.

Minimum Technical Requirements

Q1. According to M.3.c., page 42, the solicitation requests that the offeror have prior experience in operating similar call center programs in the financial services industry (e.g., 401(k)). Does lack of this type of experience disqualify an offeror?

A1. Yes.

Program Questions

Q1. Section A.3. "Purpose of Statement of Work" states "This statement of work defines the requirements for the services currently performed in Frostburg. Included with the call center functions are the closely related functions of responding to written communications (e-messaging and paper)...." Did and does FRTIB intend to include response to postal correspondence in the statement of work?

A1. The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (Agency) has included in the statement of work for this RFP the specific function of e-messaging and for business continuity reasons potentially the handling of mailed correspondence. The latter function would be a direct extension of e-messaging and would be handled under a disaster recovery scenario. We do not expect offerors to bid on correspondence handling.

Q2. Section C.2.c. (page 7) indicates that the offeror must be able to handle total program traffic within 24 hours of notification of a disaster or service interruption at the Clintwood site. In the event of a natural disaster, would the vendor be required to provide both technical telephony and staffing for the total amount of calls and related correspondence?

A2. The Agency's emphasis would be on handling the telephone traffic at the 100% of call volume level. The technology should be able to accommodate the volume of traffic. Adjustments would be made to the handling of correspondence depending upon the nature of the disaster.

Q3. Section C.5 cites that ongoing Average Handle Time for e-mails will be 7.5 minutes for e-mail messaging. Please explain how this will be calculated.

A3. As explained in Section C.5, e-messaging is not currently available. The volumes and the Average Handle Time are based on telephone volumes and the current handle time for mailed correspondence.

Q4. In Section C.5 (page 9), the solicitation states that the offeror will handle e-messaging processing for the program. Would the agency further clarify if e-messaging is defined as responding to e-mail correspondence through the agency's web site?

A4. As indicated in this section, participants will leave messages (not e-mails) in the secure section of the web site. Responses will be posted to the web site and participants will be notified by e-mail that a response is available. We anticipate that the e-mail notification will be automatically generated when the response is posted to the web site's "message board." Vendor personnel will not be communicating directly with participants via e-mail.

Q5. Section C.6. Does the FRTIB have a scheduled cycle for providing fulfillment materials to the call center provider, or is the provider required to maintain and report on an inventory of materials?

A5. The call center provider will have access to our automated fulfillment service and will be able to order materials as required. Consequently, the provider will have to keep an inventory of materials on hand, monitor its usage, and order materials as needed. New or revised materials are automatically distributed to the call center as they become available.

Q6. Section C.12. In the last paragraph, FRTIB states "past history has shown...250 to 350 calls per week" are escalated to the second level helpline PSRs. Our assumption is that these numbers are for the vendor-provided facility on this contract, and not for the FRTIB as a whole (both call centers). Is this assumption correct?

A6. The assumption is correct. This is the average number of calls per call center.

Q7. Section C.13. What is the frequency per year associated with the testing of the new IVR, PSR, and imaging applications?

A7. The frequency of testing depends upon the number of changes made to the TSP program or the supporting applications (PSR, PowerImage, etc.). For example, we have made three major changes to the TSP in the last year and numerous small enhancements to the PSR/PowerImage applications. The major changes involved testing spread over a couple of weeks; the small enhancements may have taken an hour or so. Based on past experience, the call centers have incorporated the testing into their regular workload without difficulty. Note: The number of testers is left to the discretion of the call centers – in some cases only one person may be involved; in others, supervisors and PSRs may be involved.

Q8. Section C.13. Does the testing referred to in the preceding question take place during the core hours of support provided by the call center or during off hours?

A8. As indicated above, the call centers have generally accomplished the testing during core hours. There may be rare exceptions where testing might take place outside of core hours to reduce/eliminate impact on participant support. Those instances will be well coordinated in advance, and handled on a case-by-case basis.

Q9. Section C.13. In the bulleted paragraph at the top of page 14, FRTIB requires the vendor to support “work associated with the 100 to 125 research cases that are handled monthly (approximately 100 hours per month).” Our assumption is that these numbers are for the vendor-provided facility on this contract, and not for the FRTIB as a whole (both call centers). Is this assumption correct?

A9. This assumption is correct. This is the average volume of calls per call center.

Q10. Section C.16. Does the 100% call recording requirement include screen capture as well as audio?

A10. No, the requirement is only for audio recording. Screen capture capabilities are generally associated with added quality control and coaching activities.

Q11. Section C.17. Is the vendor required to retain recorded messages and/or calls on-line for immediate access or can calls be archived to an acceptable media type for the duration of the contract term? What is the duration of time for calls to be retained on-line for immediate access?

A11. As explained in Section C16, the offeror must be able to access any archived recorded call within 24 hours of request. Consequently, this is also the maximum turnaround time for the Agency to be able to access calls (i.e., the Agency must be able to access calls within 24 hours). The vendor should propose its plan for online, immediate access versus archived access. See Attachment A, Question 8 and 27.

Q12. Section C.18.c. Is there an agency-initiated clearance requirement? If so, what does it entail?

A12. The Agency does not require security clearances for contractor personnel. The contractor is expected to provide personnel who have passed a background investigation and credit check and signed the Agency provided non-disclosure statement. See Attachments I and J.

Q13. Section C.18.c. If the FRTIB conducts the personnel security investigation, please provide the estimated or anticipated timeframe from the Government receipt of personnel security documents to personnel receiving authorization to access agency/TSP systems.

A13. N/A. See Question 12.

Q14. Attachment B. In reference to the “Abandonment Rate” of less than 2% of calls a day (Attachment B – Performance Standards), are “short” abandoned calls (calls that are abandoned within 20 seconds or less) counted in this rate?

A14. Yes.

Q15. Attachment B. Is the “Telephone Service Factor” (Attachment B – Performance Standards) – 90% of all calls must be answered within 20 seconds of receipt—to be measured on a daily or monthly basis?

A15. The vendor should be evaluating the TSF by interval to ensure compliance. The Agency reviews the TSF generally on a daily basis.

Q16. Attachment K. The table on this page appears to have been cut off on the right-hand side of the page. Would the agency please provide an Attachment K that shows the entire table.

A16. The table is attached.

Technical Questions

Q1. Attachment A, Question 31, states “Describe how you will achieve network separation as outlined in Attachment F”. Should this refer to Attachment H? If not, where is network separation mentioned in Attachment F?

A2. The reference should be to Attachment H.

Q2. How will calls be delivered to the offeror?

A2. Calls will be routed through the Agency’s telecommunications provider (currently AT&T) and distributed to the call centers based on established call routing plans depending upon the time of day and appropriate distribution percentages.

Q3. Will the inbound/outbound voice transport be done via T1/circuit? If so, will the contractor be responsible for the associated charges?

A3. Both inbound/outbound voice and data transport will be done via at least T1 lines. The Frostburg call center is currently provisioned with seven (7) Digital Signal (DS) 1 lines. The Agency is responsible for these charges and will be billed directly by the carrier.

Business and Administrative Questions

Q1. Will the offeror's cover letter and table of contents and such be counted toward the page limit?

A1. The cover letter does not count toward the page limit because it transmits both the technical and cost proposals. The table of contents does count towards the page limit.

Q2. Is it possible to get an MS Word version of the RFP?

A2. A Word version will be provided upon request.

Q3. Section B.3. The solicitation states that travel costs to the "relatively nearby" call center located in Frostburg, Maryland are less than \$5,000 per year. Further into the solicitation, it is mentioned that the parallel call center should not be susceptible to the same weather-related or other conditions that could halt operations at the Clintwood, Virginia call center. As "reasonable agency travel costs" are to be evaluated as part of the proposal, what is the Agency's sense of acceptable call center locations and travel costs?

A3. The Agency provided the \$5,000 as a reference only. The Agency has not established limits on either costs or locations because travel to and from locations across the country may depend upon availability of flights, accessibility by car or train, etc. The offeror should consider accessibility (time and ease of access) and cost in identifying its proposed call center location.

Q4. Section L.1. Does the agency have a preference of media (e.g., CD, email, etc.) for the electronic copy of each proposal volume (Technical and Cost/Price)?

A4. The Agency would prefer a CD which accompanies the hard copies of the proposals.

Q5. Section L.5. Please clarify the preferred e-mail address for Robert Battersby.

Section L.5. references Robert.Battersby@tsp.gov and the SF33 references RBatter@tsp.gov.

A5. Either e-mail address is acceptable; the Agency does not have a preference.

Q6. Is there any performance bond, payment bond, or E&O insurance that is part of this requirement?

A6. No.

Q7. Will the agency be incorporating a prompt payment incentive or is the offeror to include any prompt payment incentive into the proposal?

A7. The Agency is not planning to incorporate a prompt payment incentive and does not expect the offeror to do so.