

USAID KEY RESOURCES AND NEW TOOLS

USAID employs a variety of resources and tools to accomplish meeting the challenges of development and in order to engage broad-based participation among diverse segments of the business community.



A Malian man receives food aid.

In meeting the challenges of development and in order to engage broad-based participation among diverse segments of the business community, USAID employs a variety of resources and tools to accomplish these goals. Among the key resources and new tools being utilized by USAID are:

- **OSDBU/MRC:** The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization and Minority Resource Center—the Agency’s advocate for small businesses and disadvantaged enterprises
- **Global Technology Network:** The Agency’s focal point for information collection and dissemination on Agency’s programs and activities
- **Internet:** Electronic resource for accessing USAID information
- **Electronic Commerce:** A system which integrates Electronic Data Interchange, E-Mail, Bulletin Boards, Electronic Funds Transfer, and Internal Automated Systems
- **USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation:** A clearinghouse for development-related information, i.e., the USAID “Library”

- **USAID Handbooks on CD-ROM:** A CD-ROM compact disc containing the complete USAID document and database

These resources and tools are described below.

THE OSDBU/MRC RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING THE PARTICIPATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES AND SMALL DISADVANTAGED BUSINESSES

USAID’s Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization/ Minority Resource Center (OSDBU/MRC) coordinates the Agency’s implementation of the Small Disadvantaged Business Program and the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SEA) Section 8(a) Program. In accordance with governing legislation (Public Laws 95-507 and 100-656) OSDBU/MRC is the initial point of contact at USAID for U.S. businesses, particularly small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, veteran-owned small businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, and HUBZone small businesses seeking to increase their participation in USAID-sponsored procurements.

The primary concern of the Office, as required by law, is to help its constituency participate fully in USAID-financed development assistance activities.

OSDBU/MRC is an information clearinghouse and offers in-depth counseling on the Agency's programs, contracting and subcontracting opportunities, and marketing and operational strategies for conducting business with the Agency.

Within USAID, OSDBU/MRC is the advocate for U.S. small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, veteran-owned small businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, and HUBZone small businesses. As their advocate, the OSDBU/MRC ensures that its constituent firms receive equal opportunity and appropriate consideration in USAID-financed procurement of goods and services.

OSDBU/MRC undertakes the following initiatives to serve its constituency:

SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE DATABASE (SBRD)

The SBRD represents the first, and still the only, Extranet application at USAID. The purpose of the SBRD is to put USAID-relevant information of those vendors who wish to do business with us on the desk-tops of all Agency Program, Technical, and Contract Officers, anywhere in the world. Given the geographic dispersion of these personnel throughout the most remote parts of the third world, the SBRD provides a unique platform from which to market U.S. small and small and disadvantaged businesses capabilities to the Agency's decision-makers.

Registration in the SBRD is voluntary and takes approximately fifteen minutes. SBRD registration is not a prerequisite

to doing business with USAID and does not replicate or overlap with the functions of the Central Contractor Registry (CCR), or the publication of USAID business opportunities in FedBizOpps. Nevertheless, registration in the SBRD is highly recommended for those firms that have the capabilities to provide technical assistance services which are in demand by the Agency.

There is no provision for establishing your account and registering in the SBRD other than through the Agency's public Internet website.

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Additional information about the SBRD, as well as the logon screen may be found at: http://www.usaid.gov/business/small_business/vendordb.html

OSDBU/MRC PROVIDES BUSINESS SERVICES AND INFORMATION

- Serves as an information clearinghouse for U.S. businesses, organizations, and institutions interested in participating in USAID's financed development assistance activities
- Counsels U.S. businesses, organizations, and institutions on how to do business with USAID
- Participates in annual outreach conferences in selected cities throughout the U.S. for the

OSDBU/MRC's constituency of U.S. small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses

- Participates in conferences, workshops, and seminars sponsored by businesses, professional and trade associations, and other private and public organizations to identify and establish development partners
- Publishes informational materials and provides relevant and current information on USAID worldwide development activities
- Provides USAID missions information on corporate qualifications of U.S. small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses
- Cooperates with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), and other federal agencies to promote and enhance the participation of U.S. small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses in development assistance activities

SUBCONTRACTING MONITORING SYSTEM

OSDBU/MRC has designed and will soon place into production an automated subcontracting monitoring system which tracks the subcontract awards to its constituency from various funds drawn upon by the Agency. Our goal is to tap existing Agency financial and procurement automated systems to ensure that USAID meets its statutory mandate to provide subcontracting opportunities for small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, and HUBZone small businesses, applicable contracts are screened and monitored to ensure compliance.

USAID PROCUREMENT INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

You can access information concerning USAID procurement information including Federal Business Opportunity (FBO) announcements, official notices, annual procurement plans, and ongoing USAID procurement reform on the internet. Solicitation documents including Requests for Proposals (RFPs), Requests for Applications (RFAs), and Invitations for Bid (IFBs) are also published on the internet.

HOW TO FIND USAID PROCUREMENT INFORMATION VIA THE INTERNET

In an effort to communicate more effectively and interact with the business community, USAID is currently using Internet technologies to disseminate our business and procurement information. USAID maintains a Business website located on USAID's homepage (<http://www.usaid.gov/business>). This dynamic site allows organizations that are interested in doing business with USAID to browse as well as download solicitation documents and learn more about the Agency's business information resources such as the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and the Global Technology Network (GTN). Additionally, such information as the annual publication of procurement awards can be found in our "Yellow Book" and Common Forms for USAID Solicitations.

The following are examples of posted procurement documents that can be found on the website:

1. FBO Announcements including:
 - Requests for Proposals (RFPs), Invitation for Bids (IFBs), Requests for Application (RFA), and amendments thereto
 - Award Notices
 - Notices of Sources Sought
 - Expressions of Interest
2. Procurement Information Bulletins (PIBs)
3. Ocean Transportation Tenders

USAID'S AUTOMATED DIRECTIVES SYSTEM (ADS)

The Automated Directives System (ADS) is the agency directives management program. Agency policy directives; required procedures; and helpful, optional material are drafted, cleared, and issued through the ADS. Agency employees must adhere to these policy directives and required procedures.

The ADS is divided into six Series organized by function. Within each Series you will find ADS chapters and the Interim Updates associated with the Series. An ADS chapter usually addresses a single policy area.

Chapters contain policy directives and required procedures, and links to related reference documents.

Interim Updates are temporary policy directives issued as Policy Notices. The ADS replaces the old AID Handbook system. Some Handbook chapters are still active (see the Handbook Status List for details).

DID YOU KNOW?

Additional information on the ADS can be found on the USAID website at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads>.

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED BY THE OSDBU CONSTITUENCY



The USAID Democracy and Governance Initiative results in a town meeting in India.

A. QUESTION: HOW CAN USAID'S OSDBU HELP MY FIRM?

Answer: One of the first stops in various federal agencies for many small business owners seeking USAID contracts is the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). USAID's OSDBU has the responsibility for making sure that federal goals for using U.S. small businesses and disadvantaged enterprises are met in the Agency. OSDBU personnel counsel and assist firms in their efforts to market goods or services to the Agency. They also review Agency contracts to make sure U.S. small businesses and disadvantaged enterprises are used whenever possible. But, as many OSDBU Directors warn, the OSDBU is only a tool; it's up to small businesses and disadvantaged enterprises to make it work for them.

B. QUESTION: HOW DOES THE OSDBU/MRC MAKE USAID REGIONAL BUREAUS AND FIELD MISSIONS AWARE OF OSDBU/MRC CONSTITUENCY FIRMS?

Answer: USAID's OSDBU/MRC draws upon the firms registered in the USAID Small Business Resource Database (SBRD) to advise the bureaus and missions of qualified OSDBU/MRC constituency firms. The SBRD is an automated system maintained by OSDBU/MRC that 1) assists U.S. small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, and HUBZone small businesses in marketing their capabilities to the Agency; and 2) assists USAID project and program offices in identifying sources to fill requirements. Currently, the SBRD contains more than 1,500 registrants. Their referral to requiring offices is based on information supplied on their registration forms.

C. QUESTION: WHAT GENERAL ADVICE DOES THE OSDBU/MRC GIVE FIRMS TO HELP THEM DEVELOP BUSINESS?

Answer:

1. Stay in contact with the Office of Acquisitions and Assistance and with the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization within each agency that may have a need for your products and services
2. 8(a) Program participants are encouraged to request marketing-assistance information from their Business Opportunity Specialist (BOS) in their local SBA district office
3. Check the FedBizOpps as well as the specific federal agency web site for procurement opportunities. FedBizOpps is an online resource found at: <http://www.fedbizopps.gov>
4. Contact procurement officers in the private sector (especially prime contractors) and in local, state, and federal government offices. Make an appointment to meet with them to let them know about your products and services.

D. QUESTIONS: WHAT IS A SMALL BUSINESS? WHAT IS ITS CERTIFICATION PROCESS?

Answer: A business concern generally is considered small if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation, and can further qualify under the criteria set forth in the SBA Small Business Size Standards Regulation set forth in Title 13, Part 121 of the Code of Federal Regulations. In making a detailed definition, SBA may use these criteria, among others: number of employees, annual receipts, affiliates, or other applicable factors. In submitting a bid or proposal on a Government procurement, a concern which meets the criteria in the Regulation may represent or self-certify that it is a small business for the particular procurement involved. Under Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) the specific size criterion for procurement must be stated in the solicitation. For information on specific industry classifications (manufacturing, construction, services, transportation, refined petroleum products, research, and development and testing) and refinements of the general definition of a “Small Business,” contact the nearest SBA regional office.

E. QUESTION: HOW CAN THE USAID OSDBU/MRC HELP MY FIRM TO IDENTIFY PRIME CONTRACTORS WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN SUBCONTRACTING?

Answer: The USAID OSDBU/MRC staff stands ready to provide one-on-one counseling to its constituency of U.S. small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses to assist them in formulating their strategies to identify subcontracting opportunities and potential prime contractor targets. In addition, the USAID public website contains information on recent and existing large prime contracts. Finally, we make the content of our Small Business Resource Database (SBRD) available to large prime contractors.

F. QUESTION: WHAT ARE AN IFB, AN RFP AND AN RFQ?

Answer: There are two ways Federal purchasing agents throughout the country buy what the Government needs. They are:

1. Sealed Bid – Invitation for Bids (IFBs)
2. Buying by Negotiation – Request for Proposals (RFPs)
or Request for Quotations (RFQs)

DID YOU KNOW?

When advertising for bids, a purchasing agency sends an Invitation for Bid (IFB) to firms that have been placed on its bidders list and anyone who requests one.

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- A description of specifications for the product or service to be bought. Under no circumstances should a bidder substitute something he or she thinks might be just as good. Unless the company’s product can match the exact requirements of the specifications, the bid will be considered non-responsive.

DID YOU KNOW?

RFPs may be listed in the FedBizOpps (<http://www.fedbizopps.gov>), the Internet website, and/or posted at Federal installations as well.

- **Delivery schedule and packaging/shipping requirements:** These requirements must be met exactly as stated. Sometimes there are special conditions attached on a supplementary sheet. Study all conditions carefully and make sure you can meet all of the requirements.
- **Payment schedule and terms:** This is extremely important. All costs to the bidder should be computed very carefully.
- **Standard contract provisions and clauses, such as those relating to default, changes, and disputes:** These are binding to the contractor and should be understood clearly.
- **Deadline for submitting bids:** The deadline is strictly adhered to. The Government may disqualify any bids received after the deadline.
- **Date and time of bid opening:** Bids are opened in public at the agency purchasing office for sealed bidding, but not in negotiated procurement.
- **Contract Award.** When the bids are opened, the bidder quoting the lowest price wins the contract if the bid is responsive and if the bidder is qualified as a responsible firm.

When sealed bids are not suitable or possible, the Government may buy what it needs through negotiation. Such instances are prescribed by law and applicable regulations. Examples are:

1. When adequate specifications of a product or service are not possible to draft
2. When the product or service is experimental, developmental, or of a research nature
3. Small purchases which are made through the negotiation process. Purchases under \$100,000 are “set-aside” for small businesses if more than one small firm having adequate capabilities is able to bid on the requirement with reasonable price quotation

Request for Proposals (RFP): In buying by negotiation, a purchasing agency sends a Request for Proposals (RFP) to anyone who requests one. RFPs may be listed in the FedBizOpps (<http://www.fedbizopps.gov>), the Internet website, and/or posted at Federal installations as well. Like an IFB, the RFP describes the products or services desired, the delivery time, and other terms of the contract. As with the IFB solicitation process, there is a strict deadline for submitting a response to the RFP.

Proposals submitted must respond to the requirements of the RFP and normally require the offeror’s price, descriptions of the offeror’s product or service, resources to be used in performing the work, applicable capabilities of the offeror’s firms, and the contract terms acceptable to the offeror. After reviewing all of the proposals received, the contracting agency’s purchasing officers conduct negotiations with those offerors whose offer falls within a competitive range. The process of negotiations allows the agency to analyze, question, explore, and bargain with respect to costs, performance, delivery time, and methods of payment. The Government, however, generally reserves the right to award a contract on the

basis of initial proposals received, without negotiation; therefore, a small business firm should not rely on an opportunity to change price or terms during negotiations.

Contract Award: The contract award is decided through evaluations and negotiations after proposals have been received and reviewed. Award is made to the offeror whose final offer represents the best value to the Government. It is not required that the recipient of the award has the lowest price. Evaluation factors, if other than price, must be listed in the solicitation.

Request for Quotations (RFQ): The Request for Quotations, Standard Form 18 (SF-18), is designed for use in obtaining price, delivery, and related information from suppliers. This form is available for use by all agencies and is normally used to submit written quotations for small purchases, but it may also be used for large purchases. A quotation is not an offer; consequently, it cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract. Therefore, issuance by the Government of an order for supplies or services in response to a supplier's quotation does not establish a contract. The order is an offer by the Government to the supplier to buy certain supplies or services upon specified terms and conditions. A contract comes into being when the supplier accepts the offer by performance of the work.

G. QUESTION: HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT SMALL PURCHASE OPPORTUNITIES AND PROCEDURES?

Answer: Simplified Acquisition Procedures are spelled out in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), Part 13. Generally speaking, simplified acquisitions are a method that the Government uses to acquire supplies, equipment, and services up to a value of \$100,000. Purchases are made after seeking informal oral or written quotations generally from one to three vendors, depending on the dollar value of the required supplies or services. Small Purchases estimated to be less than \$25,000 are not advertised in the FedBizOpps (<http://www.fedbizopps.gov>).

H. QUESTION: WHAT OUTREACH PROGRAMS DOES THE USAID OSDBU/MRC UTILIZE TO INFORM ITS CONSTITUENCY THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES?

Answer: The OSDBU/MRC currently utilizes USAID's online resources to communicate with its U.S. constituency. This includes dissemination of specific procurement information via FedBizOpps (<http://www.fedbizopps.gov>); USAID programmatic and procurement forecast information (<http://www.usaid.gov>); as well as an automated platform allowing small and small and disadvantaged firms and Minority Serving Institutions to register directly with us, i.e., the USAID Small Business Resource Database (SBRD) (<https://osdbu.usaid.net/OSDBU/Login.html>).

I. QUESTION: WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE TO PROTEST SIZE AND OTHER PROTESTS TO THE CONTRACTING OFFICER?

Answer: Size Protest: Any offeror or other interested party (other than a large business) may protest the small business representation of a bidder or

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Alternate dispute resolution may be used and in fact is encouraged prior to lodging the more formal, costly and time consuming protest to either GAO or General Services Administration's Board of Contract Appeals (GSBCA).

offeror on a small business set-aside contract. In order to affect a specific solicitation, a protest must be timely. Protests must also have specificity to be valid; simple allegations that another firm is not small are insufficient to constitute a protest. Some factual grounds for the allegations must be included.

Other Than Size Protests: Contracting officers will consider all protests or objections to the award of a contract, whether submitted before or after award. If a protest is oral and the matter cannot be resolved, written confirmation of the protest will be requested. The protestor will be notified in writing of the final decision of the written protest.

J. REQUEST: EXPLAIN A PROTEST TO GAO (GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE)

Answer: Any interested party may file a protest with GAO. Usually protests are filed by disappointed bidders or offerors or by potential bidders or offerors. GAO, however, will also consider protests filed by others who have some legitimate interest in the particular action.

A GAO bid protest is initiated by filing a written protest with GAO's Office of General Counsel. A copy of the protest must be provided to the official designated in the solicitation or the contracting officer in lieu of such designation. GAO then requests a report on the matter from the procuring agency. When the agency report is received a copy is provided to the protestor who is given the opportunity to comment. Other parties may also be provided with copies of the protest and the agency report for comment. In some cases an informal conference may be held in which the protestor and others are afforded an opportunity to present their views directly to GAO attorneys responsible for the case. GAO then considers the facts and issues raised by the protest and issue a decision in the name of the Comptroller General. A copy of the decision is sent to the protestor, to interested parties, and to any agency involved. The agency normally takes action in accordance with the decision.

Processing time from date of receipt of the, protest to date of decision usually takes approximately 60 to 90 working days, depending on urgency and complexity. Contract awards or performance is normally suspended during this time period. Protests concerning solicitations, such as on restrictive specifications, must be filed prior to bid opening or the deadline for receipt of proposals.

K. QUESTION: IS THERE AN ALTERNATE WAY TO RESOLVE A DIFFERENCE OTHER THAN THE PROTEST FORUM?

Answer: Yes, alternate dispute resolution may be used and in fact is encouraged prior to lodging the more formal, costly and time consuming protest to either GAO or General Services Administration's Board of Contract Appeals (GSBCA). For further details, contact the Ombudsman within the Office of Acquisitions and Assistance.