

The Government will not be accepting any additional questions, comments, or suggestions related to the TIPSS-4 Draft RFP after January 23, 2009. The final TIPSS-4 requirements, including CMMI and EVMS, will be stated in the official RFP.

The following 46 questions related to the TIPSS-4 ITS Draft RFP were covered at the Pre-Proposal Conference held on January 12, 2009.

SECTION B

QUESTION #1

Is the fixed fee vendors propose with this IDIQ the maximum fee that can be bid on the cost reimbursement task orders or the average fee that vendors are expected to bid?

RESPONSE #1

The fixed fee vendors propose will be used for evaluation purposes only and should reflect the average fee that offerors expect to bid on future task orders. All Fee/Profit will be negotiated at the task order level for each requirement. The proposed fee at the contract level will be retained for use by the CO at the task order level negotiations as a reference point.

QUESTION #2

Are the Cost Reimbursement hourly rates meant to be average rates or will they become ceiling rates at task order competition?

RESPONSE #2

There will be no ceiling rates on cost reimbursable direct labor. The Cost Reimbursement hourly rates (Section B) should be unburdened (base) labor rates proposed in accordance with each offeror's normal estimating and accounting practices.

QUESTION #3

RFP Section B.2.1

This section asks for cost reimbursement hourly labor rates. Should fee be included in the hourly labor rate?

RESPONSE #3

No, this labor rate should reflect only the cost of each labor category with no fee, G&A, Overhead, etc. included. The complete breakdown of all cost elements including fee shall be included in the offerors Volume III response in accordance with Section L.13.

QUESTION #4

B.2 CONTRACT PRINCIPAL TASK AREA – BASE PERIOD (Period of Performance 10/01/2009 through 09/30/2010)

Should the Period of Performance be 10/01/2009 through 9/30/2014?
Consistency with other RFP sections.

RESPONSE #4

TIPSS-4 ITS has a base period of 5 years. Under Section B.2 separate periods of performance have been identified under the base period to allow offerors the option of proposing escalating cost reimbursement rates.

QUESTION #5

Paragraph B.2
Section J.6 does not provide estimated hours for Program Manager (CLIN 0002), Business Manager (CLIN 0003), and Quality Assurance Manager (CLIN 0004). How should Total Labor be calculated?

RESPONSE #5

See Revised Section B.

QUESTION #6

Section B2 - B7
Pages B-3 - B-22

The draft RFP does not specify the location for services – contractor site or government site. Does the Government intend to provide a revised format for listing both? Should offerors propose all hours at government-site rates?

RESPONSE #6

Labor rates shall be based on the Washington DC Metropolitan Area. In the event that work is performed outside of the DC Metro Area, different labor rates will be negotiated at the task order level.

QUESTION #7

Section B2 CLIN 0001 Information Technology Services page B-3 calls for a Total Estimated Cost Plus Fixed Fee. How does the Government want us to calculate this?

RESPONSE #7

Offerors shall use the labor hours provided in Attachment J.6 along with their proposed labor rate for each category to calculate the total labor cost. The total estimated CPFF will include the offerors total labor cost, Fee, G&A, Overhead, FCCM, etc., assuming the work is performed in the DC Metro Area at the contractor's site.

QUESTION #8

How many total awards will the government make under TIPSS4 ITS?
Of the total, how many awards does the Government anticipate making to small businesses? B.8 B-23

RESPONSE #8

The Government does not have a pre-determined number of awards it will make. The number will be determined based on the outcome of the evaluation.

QUESTION #9

Will bidders be required to develop separate sets of rates for the labor categories for the different regions where work will be performed? If not, will bidders be required to develop a blending strategy to provide blended rates that can accommodate all regions in which work may be performed?

RESPONSE #9

Offerors shall assume that the work will be performed in the Washington, DC Metro Area. In the event work on a specific task order is performed outside of this area the Government will negotiate labor rates for different geographical regions at the task order level.

SECTION C

QUESTION #10

Reference RFP Section C.6, All Paragraphs, Page L-7.
The government provides a detailed listing of the tasks that could be addressed through Task Orders under this vehicle, and many of them would appear to overlap with the tasks that are anticipated for issue under the SB vehicle, under the headings of MBOSS and Cyber Security. Can the government provide any information regarding how the

government will determine whether a Task Order is best addressed through the Full & Open vehicle or the SB vehicle, given that the government has defined the same set of tasks and job classifications for both vehicles, although the actual task order headings are different?

RESPONSE #10

The CO will use market research, historical data, look at the size and complexity of the requirement, ensure small business goals are met, and any other determinants in choosing the appropriate vehicle.

QUESTION #11

Reference RFP Section C.3, All Paragraphs, Page C-4.

This solicitation is defined as a Full & Open solicitation, indicating that the government is willing to make awards to qualified businesses of any size, whether "small" or "large". The government has provided historical information as to the award pattern/mix under the earlier vehicles. Can the government provide any information as to the total number of awards to be made under TIPSS-4 Full & Open, both to traditional large business and to small business, as defined by the NAICS Code size standard? Or is it the government's intention to use the Full & Open vehicle primarily as a large business vehicle and incorporate small business through teaming and direct participation as prime contractors on TIPSS-4 SB?

How does the government anticipate "leveling the playing field" when it comes to: 1) evaluating a small business led team on the Full & Open solicitation, and 2) giving fair and equal consideration to small business led teams at the Task Order level. Or does the very fact of being small put a small business vendor at a disadvantage on this competition based on the evaluation standards and the anticipated size and scale of Task Orders coming out of this vehicle?

RESPONSE #11

Each contractor, regardless of size, will be evaluated based on its proposal. This acquisition will be evaluated on a fair and equal basis to ALL contractors.

QUESTION #12

Section C.5.1 Regional Pricing

DCAA often evaluates escalations, but rates are part of the bid and as such should be a determining factor of an RFP response. How is DCAA going to audit rates, "after" an award, understanding that this is an IDIQ? Is this going to be on a Task Order by Task Order basis based on region for the work proposed?

RESPONSE #12

Offerors shall assume that the work will be performed in the Washington, DC Metro Area. In the event work on a specific task order is performed outside of this area the Government will negotiate labor rates for different geographical regions at the task order level. DCAA will act in accordance with prevailing federal guidelines when auditing any contract rates.

QUESTION #13

Section C.6 Information Technology Services (ITS) Principal Task Area

Will the Government provide more detailed descriptions of the bulleted functional areas on pages C-6 and C-7? Specifically, can the Government describe what “Case Studies” means?

RESPONSE #13

Typically, case studies have a tax compliance implication in that IRS personnel will study case (e.g., examinations of off-shore bank accounts used to hide assets/income) trends and proposed solutions for perceived tax compliance problems. However, cases can exist in other non-compliance environments along with studies of those cases (e.g., court cases) for future resolution.

QUESTION #14

Section C.9: Task Order Labor Descriptions. With few exceptions, none of the labor categories define the experience or education levels required for the labor category. This will cause each contractor to define the skill level of each category, and creates the potential for manipulating their proposed hourly rates by bidding lower skilled staff as direct labor than may be required.

Will the Government add either minimum education or minimum experience requirements to each of the labor categories?

RESPONSE #14

No.

QUESTION #15

Reference RFP Section C.7, Paragraphs All, Pages C-7 and C-8

Are the key personnel roles defined in Section C.7 required to be Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees dedicated to this contract?

RESPONSE #15

No, but any person identified as key personnel must give top priority to their task order.

QUESTION #16

Please explain the rationale for including a comprehensive scope of work in Section C of the full and open solicitation (TIRNO-09-R-00012) and only a subset of that scope of work in Section C of the small business set aside solicitation (TIRNO-09-R-00013). The apparent result is that large businesses in the many different principle task areas listed in Section C.6 of TIRNO-09-R-00012 will have an opportunity to participate in TIPSS-4 but the set-aside portion of the solicitation is limited to small businesses who specialize in Management/Business Operations Support Services and Cybersecurity. There are many responsible small business concerns capable of responding to other principle task areas listed in Section C.6 of TIRNO-09-R-00012, such as application development. It would seem that including a majority of the principle task areas in only the full and open solicitation prevents such small businesses from participating in all principle tasks areas under the TIPSS-4 vehicle as a prime offeror.

Please explain how this division of labor addresses the Small Business Act objective of assuring that a fair proportion of the total purchases in each industry category are placed with small-business concerns.

RESPONSE #16

The Small Business Act is satisfied two ways: 1) small businesses are welcome to compete under the ITS contract and 2) under the exclusive SB contract.

QUESTION #17

Reference: RFP Section C, Paragraph C.6, Pages 6 and 7.

Task areas “Certification and Accreditation” and “Security Certification and Accreditation” are listed. Please explain the difference between those two task areas.

RESPONSE #17

Security certification is a comprehensive assessment of the management, operational and technical security controls documented in the certification documentation for each information system in support of security accreditation. The objective of certification and accreditation is to determine the extent to which the controls are implemented correctly, operating as intended and producing the desired outcome with respect to meeting the security requirements for the system. The results of a security certification are used to assess the risks and document the system security plan to provide the factual basis for a security accreditation decision. Security accreditation is the official management decision an IRS Senior Official gives to authorize operation of systems and accepts the risk to the IRS operations and assets.

QUESTION #18

Section C.3 page C-4 the Government states that “if another Federal agency wishes to use TIPSS-4 ITS arrangements can be made.” What other Federal Agency would the Government consider granting access to TIPSS-4? What would the process be for other-agency usage of TIPSS-4?

RESPONSE #18

TIPSS-4 is a Multiple Award Contract (MAC); however, if another federal agency wishes to use TIPSS-4, it is permissible based on the Economy Act. If another agency finds that using TIPSS-4 is more economical to use than awarding its own contract, then the appropriate documentation between the two agencies will be completed.

QUESTION #19

Section C.5.1 Regional Pricing page C-6 states “Labor Category selections for regional work sites will be priced based on Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA) approved contractor rates.” Where do we provide these regional rates? Will the ‘B’ tables be amended to include regional rates?

RESPONSE #19

Offerors shall assume that the work will be performed in the Washington, DC Metro Area. In the event work on a specific task order is performed outside of this area the Government will negotiate labor rates for different geographical regions at the task order level.

QUESTION #20

Section C.6 page C-6.
What is the difference between “Certification and Accreditation” and “Security Certification and Accreditation?”

RESPONSE #21

Security certification is a comprehensive assessment of the management, operational and technical security controls documented in the certification documentation for each information system in support of security accreditation. The objective of certification and accreditation is to determine the extent to which the controls are implemented correctly, operating as intended and producing the desired outcome with respect to meeting the security requirements for the system. The results of a security certification are used to access the risks and document the system security plan to provide the factual basis for a security accreditation decision. Security accreditation is the official management decision an IRS Senior Official gives to authorize operation of systems and accepts the risk to the IRS operations and assets.

QUESTION #22

RFP Section C.7.1.2 PROGRAM MANAGER FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS, Paragraph 1, Page C-9

This paragraph describes the role of the "Program Manager". The RFP states...

"The Program Manager is a senior manager responsible for coordinating the management of all work performed under this contract and shall be capable of negotiating and making binding decisions for the company. The Program Manager shall act as the central point of contact for the contract. The Program Manager is ultimately responsible for coordinating the effort of subcontractors, team members, and vendors."

The underlined portion of the above is repeated in the duties for the Business Manager listed in Section **C.7.1.3 BUSINESS MANAGER FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS, Paragraph 1, Page C-10** and in Section **C.9.1.1 Project Manager. Paragraph 1, Page C-13** for the Task Order Project Manager.

Please confirm that it is the government's intent to have this responsibility be a part of all three positions.

RESPONSE #22

Yes it is. Each one of the three contract level positions can function as the Lead Representative for their companies; it will depend on the requirement as to which of the three positions will be needed for a particular task order. Therefore, all three positions must be capable of negotiating and making binding decisions for the company.

QUESTION #23

Reference C12-C 31

The last paragraph seems to imply that all Labor Categories require a "...certification from an accredited Information Technology (IT) Institution..." either in lieu of or in some cases in addition to a four year college or university degree. However, none of the Labor Category descriptions specify either a degree or specific certification requirement.

Will the Government please clarify its intent regarding degrees and specific certifications for identified Labor Categories?

RESPONSE #23

The Government has no requirement for a degree. In those instances where certifications exist, it is so stated.

QUESTION #24

Reference C6 & C7

- a) What is the dollar threshold for tasks awarded under large or small business categories?
- b) The number of subtask areas has decreased from TIPPS3 to TIPPS4. Is there a significant change in scope or activities for TIPPS3 to TIPPS4?

RESPONSE #24

(a) To equal the “playing field” no dollar thresholds are imposed for TIPSS-4. (b) No significant change in scope.

QUESTION #25

Reference C7 – C 31

This PLC appears to be for a more senior level Information Engineer. Will the IRS consider adding another PLC for a mid-level Information Engineer?

RESPONSE #25

Yes.

SECTION G

QUESTION #26

Reference: Section G.8.2 identifies all of the cost elements that must be included on SF 1035 (for other than Fixed Price Task Orders). The list of items does not include “General and Administrative Costs”. (Item (f)(2) identifies Fringe Benefits and Item (g) identifies Indirect Costs – Overhead).

Will General and Administrative (G&A) need to be included in the SF1035, and if so, will rate disclosure be similar to that required for Fringe Benefits and Overhead?

RESPONSE #26

Yes, G&A should be included in accordance with the requirement cited in Section G.8.2 (g) of the RFP.

QUESTION #27

Reference: Section G.9 states that the Government is not responsible for any costs incurred in preparation or processing of any unsolicited proposal.

QUESTION: Is the Government's intent saying it will not DIRECTLY be responsible for these costs or that a contractor incurring such costs must treat them as 'unallowable' from its indirect costs pools?

RESPONSE #27

The Government will NOT directly pay for the cost of unsolicited proposals. Please refer to FAR 31.205-18 for the allowability of indirect bid and proposal costs.

QUESTION #28

Reference: RFP Section G.8

Contractors with government DCAA approved and audited accounting systems, who invoice Labor and ODC's and Travel(IAW JTR) as required by the audit agency and FAR maintain all backup data, therefore such data is available for audit. Invoices will include support schedules which list the travel and ODC's purchased. In light of Executive Order 13423, current EPA requirements to reduce paperwork and the governments need for timely invoices timesheets, we request that the requirement to deliver receipts of travel and ODC's with the invoice be reconsidered.

RESPONSE #28

Contractors will be required to adhere to Section G.8 of the RFP.

QUESTION #29

Reference: Section G.4. page G-3

Will it be necessary for bidders to know the details of the TIPSS-4 Contract Management Plan in order to submit a responsive bid? If yes, where can a copy be obtained?

RESPONSE #29:

No, it is not necessary for bidders to know the details of the TIPSS-4 Contract Management Plan in order to submit a responsive bid. The Plan is an internal document for the Government contracting staff.

SECTION H

QUESTION #30

Reference: Section H.2 Conversion to a Performance-Based Acquisition, Page H-3. The Government states “At the Task Order level, if the Government and the contractor agree, a task order can be converted to a performance-based order after the initial period of performance.”

What constitutes the conversion of a Task Order to a performance-based order?

RESPONSE #30: As discussed in Section H.2 the contracting officer and contractor will agree to the ability to convert a statement of work to a performance work statement.

Vendors are encouraged to visit the Seven Step Performance Base Website for further clarification of what constitute an performance based task order.

http://acquisition.gov/comp/seven_steps/home.html

- Describe the work in terms of the required results rather than either "how" the work is to be accomplished or the number of hours to be provided.
- Enable assessment of work performance against measurable performance standards.
- Rely on the use of measurable performance standards and financial incentives in a competitive environment to encourage competitors to develop and institute innovative and cost-effective methods of performing the work.

QUESTION #31

Reference: Section H.16 requires a contractor to notify the Contracting Officer if there is any change in the status of its approved Purchasing System.

Is having an approved Purchasing System a condition of receiving a TIPSS-4 prime contract?

If yes, and a contractor has not undergone a Purchasing System review at the request of a Government agency (typically performed by DCAA), will the Government accept the opinion of an outside independent firm that the contractor’s Purchasing System meets the standards establish by DCAA?

RESPONSE #31

No an approved purchasing system is not a condition of receiving a TIPSS-4 Prime Contract Award. However, in accordance with Section M.5 of the RFP, Government personnel will make a determination of responsibility. The factors listed in Section M.5. (including Purchasing and Subcontracting) may be investigated and considered in the evaluation process. The evaluation of responsibility will be in accordance with FAR Part 9, offerors that are not deemed responsible will not be considered for award.

No, the Government will not accept the opinion of an outside firm in determining whether or not a contractor has an approved purchasing system. In accordance with FAR 44.305-1, the cognizant Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) is responsible for granting, withholding or withdrawing approval of a contractor's purchasing system. However, the Government may review the information from the outside firm as part of the pre-award survey as detailed in Section M.5 of the RFP.

QUESTION #32

Reference: Section H.32

For large business, this section could be counter productive to the Government's aim of creating opportunities for small business and mentor protégé programs. Additionally, this can also cause a conflict with company's DCAA approved accounting systems and how costs must be allocated.

RESPONSE #32

As detailed in Section H.32 of the RFP, the Government's intent is to prevent excessive pass-through costs. There is no conflict with cost allocations or contractor's accounting systems. Refer to FAR 31.201-4 (determining allocability) and FAR 31.201-6 (accounting for unallowable costs).

QUESTION #33

Reference: RFP Section H.6.1, Paragraphs All, Pages H-11 to H-14

Can the CMMI requirement be task order centric? Why must the prime contractor be CMMI level 2 certified at time of submission when subcontracting firms may actually perform the given software development task? CMMI relates to software development and not all the tasks in this solicitation are related to software development. Excluding firms from bidding on CMMI tasks that not related to software development is outside of the CMMI guidelines and the intent of the certification.

RESPONSE #33

The prime contractor shall meet the minimum software development requirement. If the prime has subcontractor(s) that meet the minimal software requirement, then the prime shall use the Supplier Agreement Management process area to manage the subcontractor(s). For those subcontractor(s) that do not meet the minimal software development requirement, please refer to Section **H.6.2 IRSAP 1052.239-9006 Software Development Prerequisite-Supplement (JAN 2006)**, page H-14 in the RFP.

QUESTION #34

Reference RFP Section H.20, Paragraphs All, Pages H-19 and H-20

This section's title pertains to key personnel at the contract level; however the first paragraph on page H.20 refers to "Key Task Order Personnel", please clarify how "Key Contract Personnel" are determined.

RESPONSE #34

Section C.7 describes the difference in the contract and task order level personnel.

SECTION J

QUESTION #35

- (a) Is there a small business set-aside for the ITS work under TIPSS-4?
- (b) Does the IRS intend to make one or more ITS awards to small business?
- (c) Can the same small business receive an award under ITS and MBOSS?

RESPONSE #35

- (a) No
- (b) The evaluation process will not discriminate among offerors business sizes. Awards will be won in the ITS contract solely on the strength of proposals.
- (c) Yes.

SECTION L

QUESTION #36

Reference: Section L.9.3 Format, Organization, and Contents of Files

Can the Government explain the usage of “box of boxes” relative to volume numbers and volume labeling? Does “box” refer to delivery box? One can envision multiple boxes for shipping, and thus the exterior boxes would be labeled 1 of x , 2 of x , and so on. How does this relate to volume number and volume labeling? Are there instructions with regard to contents of each box? Does the Government anticipate retaining the shipping boxes?

RESPONSE #36

“Box” does refer to the delivery box. The purpose of labeling the boxes as described in Section L.9.3 is to ensure that the entire proposal has been inventoried and there is not a box missing. The labels on the shipping box do not need to indicate which Volume is contained inside of each box. The Government does not anticipate retaining the shipping boxes.

QUESTION #37

Section L.12.2.1 TAB A – Past Experience. “Of the three project profiles required, at least one shall detail experience with the development and implementation of a major IT system, and at least one project profile shall demonstrate experience with performing operations & maintenance (O&M) of a major IT system.”

(a) Can past performance of an offeror’s teammate/subcontractor on the ITS proposal be used for some number of references and project profiles?

(b) Please describe the process for conducting and documenting the interviews to capture the information in the questionnaire in J-11 for evaluating the offeror’s past performance

RESPONSE #37

(a) No, Project Profiles must reflect the prime offeror’s experience.

(b) The contracting staff will contact the references provided by the offeror via phone. A phone interview will then be held where the questions contained in Attachment J-11 will be answered and recorded. The questionnaires will then be given to the technical evaluation team to be evaluated in accordance with Section M and incorporated into the overall rating.

QUESTION #38

Reference: Section L.9.1 Instructions for Past Performance References

This section says offerors may submit seven references for past performance, however, Section L.9.2 Instructions for Proposal Submission, does not identify where these references should be included in the response. Where should vendors include the seven past performance references?

RESPONSE #38

Section L.9.1 - “Offerors shall submit references via email to the TIPSS4@irs.gov in the electronic format identified in Section L.9.3(c)(1). Each reference shall be no longer than 1 page in length.”

QUESTION #39

Reference: Section L.3, Page L-4. The contract type is identified as IDIQ.

What task order types (CPFF, T&M or FFP) will be requested under the IDIQ?

RESPONSE #39

The Government anticipates using a wide range of contract types when issuing task orders. Previous task order types used under TIPSS-3 and anticipated under TIPSS-4 for include but are not limited to the following, FFP, CPFF, CPIF, CPAF, CPAT, T&M, and hybrid task orders using two or more of these contract types for different subtasks.

QUESTION #40

Subject: RFP No. TIRNO-09-R-00XXX, TIPSS-4 ITS

Reference: RFP Section _L_, Paragraph(s) _L.11.5_, Page(s) __L-13__.

- (a) Does a small business submitting as a prime on ITS need to provide small business goals?
- (b) Does a small business submitting as a prime on ITS need to provide a small business plan?
- (c) If small business goals/plans are not required of a small business, how would the small business be judged in these areas against large business offerors?

RESPONSE #40

- (a) No
- (b) No
- (c) They will be rated as “Not Applicable” and the remaining sub factors will be used to determine the overall rating.

QUESTION #41

Reference: Section L14-15, L12.2.1

Can the offerors use the same past performance reference to show (a) the development and implementation of a major IT system, and (b) operations and maintenance of a major

IT system? Can this be done in one project profile, or must they be written as two separate profiles?

RESPONSE #41

This can be done in one project profile provided the offeror can adequately demonstrate their experience in both areas.

QUESTION #42

Reference: Page L-8 – Volume I– Terms and Conditions States:

“Offerors shall submit an original and two hard copies of Volume I along with an electronic copy on compact disc.” Page L.9 – Volume III – Cost and Price: States: “Offerors shall submit an original and one hard copy of Volume I along with two electronic copies on compact disc....” Please clarify the submittal requirements for Volume I and Volume III.

RESPONSE #42

The Section has been revised.

QUESTION #43

Reference: Section L.12.1 states that as it conducts its evaluation, the Government may use both data from the offeror’s proposal, as well as data obtained from other sources. L.12.1 L-14

Please list the other sources that may be used and are these public or private sources?

RESPONSE #43

Any source deemed appropriate by the Contracting Officer (i.e. court papers, newspapers, TV, etc.)

QUESTION #44

Question: SEI CMMI certification uses two approved approaches to performing appraisals: staged and continuous. The Draft RFP only appears to mention “staged.” Will the IRS allow both approaches?

RESPONSE #44

We will accept either representation (staged or continuous) of CMMI-DEV version 1.2 model.

SECTION M

QUESTION #45

RFP Reference Section M.3.3.2

What organization is the “Cognizant Federal Agency” for the TIPSS-4 procurement?

RESPONSE #45

There is no CFA for the TIPSS-4 requirement. Each offeror has to determine what Government agency is its CFA.

QUESTION #46

Reference: L-8 and M-4

“Offerors shall submit references via email” ...whereas Section M.3.2.1 states that the “Government will obtain information from references”.

Does the Government wish offerors to assist in obtaining responses to the questionnaires contained in Section J, Attachment 11- Past Performance Questionnaire (PPQ) by providing them directly to the referenced POC and including their response with the proposal?

If so where in the proposal should those completed PPQs be shown?

Please clarify specific offeror responsibilities and instructions for handling these PPQs.

RESPONSE #46

As stated in Section L.9.1, offerors must provide references via email and as stated in full context of Section M.3.2.1, “The Government will obtain information from references provided by offers using a standardized questionnaire in Section J, Attachment 11.”