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Q&A: Performance Work Statement (PWS)

What is a Performance Work Statement?

A Performance Work Statement (PWS) is a document that outlines all of the tasks that the agency needs performed within a given function. The PWS identifies what outputs the IRS expects from the function, performance standards and expectations, and other details such as the location where the work is performed.

How does a PWS fit into the competitive sourcing process?

Work on a PWS usually begins after IRS executives make a decision to “compete” a function based on the results of a Business Case Analysis (BCA).

Will the PWS affect my job?

The PWS determines which activities the function will perform after the competition, whether the agency or a contractor wins. Those activities or requirements will be used to develop management’s bid to perform the work, also known as the Most Efficient Organization (MEO) and by a contractor to submit their proposal.

How is a Performance Work Statement used?

Both the internal team that develops the MEO and external contractors use the PWS to develop their bids, determining what mix of employees and resources is necessary to be competitive.

The PWS also includes a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP), which articulates how the IRS will measure the performance of the winning service provider.

Who drafts a PWS?

A team of IRS employees drafts the PWS with contractor support. The team lead is chosen by the leadership of the functional area. Team members include managers and bargaining-unit employees who have an intimate knowledge of both the existing function and the goals of the Service. To ensure that competition is as fair as possible, a “firewall” exists between the PWS team and the MEO team. This means members of the PWS team may not serve on the MEO team and vice versa.

Does NTEU play a role in the drafting of a PWS?

Yes, NTEU selects bargaining unit employees for the PWS Team.

Are customers or clients involved?

Customers of the activity may be interviewed to help determine acceptable levels of service.

How long does the process take?

At the IRS, PWS teams have taken anywhere from four to six months to complete their work. Under recently revised A-76 rules, the whole competition process, from the issuance of solicitation to award, lasts 12 months, with a possible six-month extension. This does not include pre-planning activity such as the Business Case Analysis.

What role can I play?

The PWS team will survey and interview employees to determine the activities that are performed in the function under study. You should be prepared to provide the PWS Team with information on what you do and how often you perform a specific task.

What if I say that I perform a certain task more or less often than I actually do?

Employees are urged to be as accurate as possible in describing the work they perform because providing inaccurate data to the PWS Team could result in an inaccurate solicitation for bids. An inaccurate solicitation could make it difficult for the winning service provider—whether it is management's bid or a contractor—to do the work the IRS needs to be done.