

Questions pertaining to Solicitation#TIRNO-08-R-00004 – 3/20/2008

- (20) Are IRS personnel allowed to access Microsoft Live Meeting for web training classes?

To use the Office Live Meeting full-featured product, client-side software (otherwise know as a plug-in) would have to be installed on IRS computers. Currently, this product has not been approved for use by IRS employees. Before it could be used, it would have to be tested in the IRS computer environment to uncover any integration or security issues.

Live Meeting does have an applet-based version that does not require software installation. However, this version is not as feature-rich and would still have to be tested before it could be used for training purposes.

Accordingly, we cannot state at this time if Live Meeting would be an acceptable training vehicle for the IRS.

- (21) What sections constitute the full technical proposal and the associated page limit of 100 pages? For example, if a vendor proposes on Award Group 1 and includes the following Sections: 2, 3, 4, 6 and 9 (included in the page limit of 100 pages)

The technical proposal should include any and all information pertinent to the specific proposed award group. This information should allow the IRS to adequately evaluate the vendor's technical capability according to the evaluation criteria noted in Section V, sub section 4.1, Evaluation Factors.

- (22) If an Offeror is responding to two separate Award Groups, and they then wish to submit an additional “bundled” response that combines both Award Groups, would that “bundled” response require both a Volume I (Price/Business Proposal) and a Volume II (Technical and Past Performance Proposal)? In this example/question, the components of Volume II in this “bundled” response are identical in the individual responses for each separate Award Group.

If a vendor is proposing on two or more award groups, and wishes to submit a 'bundled' response where Volume II (Technical Proposal) is the same as each separate entity being offered, they are encouraged to submit only Volume I (Price/Business Proposal) of the 'bundled' response. Vendors must clearly distinguish the 'bundled' proposal from any other offers being presented. However, if a vendor's 'bundled' response is clearly different from the separate proposal for each award group, then a Volume II must be submitted also. Again, accurately labeling the proposals is crucial to this process.

- (23) Section 7.1.2, page 11, states: The contractor...shall list all content that is specifically excluded from the offering. For this list of excluded content, we are seeking confirmation that adobe acrobat is an acceptable format. Can you confirm that this format would be acceptable?

In this context, Adobe Acrobat is an acceptable format

- (24) Section 6.2.3 states: Additionally, the IRS or the Office of Chief Counsel of the IRS may create new forms of guidance during the term of this contract. Once such guidance is instituted and published, it is expected that it will also be included at no additional cost.

Taken to an extreme, the open-endedness of this provision could result in vendors incurring significant cost in processing any new forms of guidance, especially if the form of guidance is not currently in existence. New forms of guidance could potentially carry a high cost to merely acquire the data through an IRS 3rd party designee with potentially sole control. Depending upon the format of the data, volume, and frequency of updates/changes, processing costs could be extraordinarily significant as well. Would the IRS drop the "at no additional cost" provision in light of the foregoing? If not, could the IRS provide clarification on the new guidance being contemplated here? What types of documents are contemplated? Are we talking about new updates to existing bodies of guidance? Could the IRS provide additional information regarding the expected volume, frequency, and format of the new forms of guidance? What types of access and functionality does the IRS expect for these documents?

The IRS is interested in having access to internal guidance as it is published. As we are unaware of any new or updated guidance currently being contemplated, we cannot provide details regarding the nature of such guidance. The vendor shall provide the same access and functionality for any new documents added as those provided for the other documents described in Section 6.

- (25) Section 9.4.2.1 states: The contractor shall offer continuous, incremental training on a recurring basis at both the beginner and advanced levels. The contractor shall address how it plans to establish a recurring schedule of training classes with online registration. However, Section 9.4.2.3 states: All requests for training or product demonstrations shall be coordinated with SPDER. Contractors are not permitted to schedule training events directly with IRS end users. These two sections seems to contradict each other; in the first section, it seems that the contractor should offer a schedule of classes that can be offered through their own online training software system, but in the second section of the RFP it seems that the IRS would control the registration process.

Would you be able to clarify how the IRS would like this process to be coordinated?

Sections 9.4.2.1 and 9.4.2.3 are not in conflict but are intended to address two different issues. In 9.4.2.1, the IRS is seeking information related to the availability and management of online training classes. Section 9.4.2.3 is related to direct requests for training and product demonstrations outside of the ongoing training sessions discussed in 9.4.2.1.

- (26) Because this is an IDIQ contract, and based upon the information set forth on page 42 of the RFP, it appears that the Government's minimum order pursuant to any contract awarded is limited to \$500,000, meaning that the government's spend for any contract awarded pursuant to this RFP could

be as little as \$500,000 in total. The fixed costs associated with a vendor's bid will exceed the government's minimum spending in this regard.

Our understanding is that pursuant to 48 CFR 15.208(e), a vendor may withdraw its offer by written notice at any time before contract award. Our understanding is that an "award" in this context means a vendor may withdraw its offer any time prior to the vendor's signing any SF 1449 (containing the government's base year order and out-year estimates) furnished by the government. Is our understanding correct in this regard?

Yes

- (27) Pursuant to Section 2.0(b) (8) of the RFP (page 37), FAR 52.219- 9, Small Business Subcontracting Utilization of Small Business Concerns (May 2004) is incorporated in the contract. The most current version of FAR 52.219-9 is dated November 2007. Please advise whether the date of this provision should be changed from May 2004 to November 2007.

The most recent version of the provision (Nov. 2007) is applicable to the solicitation and will be incorporated into the contract.

- (28) Section 2.0(e) (vi) references FAR 52.222-41, Service Contract Act of 1965, as Amended (July 2005), flow down required for all subcontracts subject to the Service Contract Act of 1965 (41 U.S.C. 351, et seq.) (page 41 of the RFP). The most current version of FAR 52.222-41 is dated November 2007. Please advise whether the date of this provision should be changed from July 2005 to November 2007.

The most recent version of the provision (Nov. 2007) is applicable to the solicitation and will be incorporated into the contract.

- (29) Section 2.0, Addendum to 52.212-1—Instructions to Offerors—Commercial Items (page 74 of the RFP) imposes a limit on the font size to be used in responses (12 point font). Can offerors use a smaller 10 point font for various page elements that are not central to the proposal response (e.g., headers, footers, image captions, tables and charts), provided these elements remain easily readable?

Vendors should utilize the font size (12 pt) specified in the RFP throughout their printed proposals.

- (30) Section 5.1 the databases, sources and products lists and descriptions requested in 12 point font on page 57 by the RFP will result in literally thousands of printed pages at that font size. Would submitting the requested lists in 10 point font on CD-ROM, and not in printed format, be acceptable?

Submittal of the requested databases, sources and products lists and descriptions in 12pt font on CD-ROM is acceptable. List of this nature do not count toward the 100 page limit.

(31) In Section II - Contract Line Item Prices, pages 24- 31, the Unit of Issue Column has several entries of "LO". What does "LO" signify?

The abbreviation "LO" is used to represent a LOT and refers to the specific quantity of a single contractual line item.

(32) Past Performance References, page 75 of the RFP. The IRS indicates that "It shall not be the IRS' responsibility to follow up with past performance references who do not respond..." Given the point scored importance of past performance, would the IRS being willing to notify the vendor when the IRS has made its attempt to contact a past performance reference, allowing the vendor an opportunity to follow up and assure a response from the reference?

In the SOW, we correctly state the above. Additionally, we note that offerors are encouraged to notify the references that their responses to inquiries are fundamental to the evaluation of proposals for this project and that the IRS may be contacting them. The IRS will make every attempt to contact the reference however; the onus will be on the vendor to ensure that the reference information is current, applicable and aware of the forthcoming request.

(33) Sections 7.5.2 and 8.5 of the RFP indicate that "It is highly desirable that a describe all system requirements for implementation of this Intranet-based service, as well as any additional costs for the Intranet-based service." Could the IRS provide more detail on what it is seeking here? It would seem nearly impossible to replicate a commercial online tax-only or comprehensive research services offering within an IRS Intranet. Is it possible that this provision was intended to be an Award Group 1 requirement instead of an Award Group 2 & 3 requirement?

The provision is intended for Award Groups 2 and 3. Our intent is to gauge whether replicating an on-line commercial research service on our Intranet is feasible.

(34) Sections 7.4.3 and 8.4.1 indicate that it is a mandatory feature that the product have proven and known ability to provide LAN/WAN access. Could the IRS provide more detail on what it is seeking here? LAN/WAN access seems inapplicable to online tax-only or comprehensive research services. Is it possible that this provision was intended to be an Award Group 1 requirement instead of an Award Group 2 &3 requirement?

The provision is intended for Award Groups 2 and 3. Our intent is to ensure the vendor's ability to provide their product to entities with complex network infrastructures and with multiple computers on Local Area Networks connected to Wide Area Networks.

(35) In response to offerors' questions previously submitted, the IRS indicated that "The page limitation for the Technical Proposal is 100 pages for each of the award groups for which the offeror has made a proposal. This means that if a vendor makes a proposal for all 3 award groups, their Technical Proposal could have a maximum of 300 pages." This methodology appears to give an advantage to any offeror intending to compete for multiple award groups. For example, an offeror competing for Award Group 1 and Award Group 2 will have 200 pages available to describe its response; an offeror competing for just Award Group 2

will only have 100 pages to work with, even though the response for Award Group 2 has to respond to mandatory and highly desirable content/features outlined in Award Group 1. The offeror responding to multiple award groups could simply use cross references to earlier pages for information in different award groups, thus freeing up pages for a more thorough response to subsequent award groups.

Because the content/features required increases incrementally from one award group to another, would the IRS consider page limits that also increase incrementally, such as the following:

- Responding to Award Group 1 only: 100 pages
- Responding to Award Groups 1 & 2 or Award Group 2 only: 200 pages
- Responding to Award Groups 1, 2, & 3 or Award Group 3 only: 300 pages

We reiterate our previous response that the page limitation for the Technical Proposal is 100 pages for each of the award groups for which the offeror has made a proposal. The vendor may not utilize more than 100 pages for any award group even if proposals for other award groups did not use the full 100 pages allowed. Each proposal will be evaluated as a separate entity. Any pages in excess of the allowed 100 page limit will not be evaluated.

- (36) Section 7.2.4. requires briefs as a mandatory item. The current IRS contract only requires briefs in the Award Group 2, Comprehensive Research Services. Would the IRS consider eliminating the requirement to offer briefs in Section 7.2.4, or, in the alternative, indicate that the content is highly desirable, rather than mandatory?

*The requirement in Section 7.2.4 to include Briefs as a mandatory item has been changed. **This item is now considered highly desirable content.***

- (37) *How far back the IRS would like archive of each required database on the CD-ROM to go?*

The amount of archival data provided via CD-ROM depends primarily on any space limitations of the media. As the IRS cannot know the file sizes for these data, we cannot make a requirement regarding how comprehensive archive files on the CD-ROMs must be. Therefore, the vendor shall fully describe the content on the CD-ROMs, including information regarding archival data.

- (38) Who is the incumbent contractor? What is the total value of the current contract?

Contract # TIRNO-04-D-00003: Comprehensive Research Services
Vendor: West Publishing Corp.
Estimated Contract Value thru 1/08: \$22,808,022.00

Contract # TIRNO-04-D-00009: CD & Tax Research Services
Vendor: Lexis Nexis
Estimated Contract Value thru 1/08: \$11,831,997.00

- (39) Should the CD contain all documentation from Volumes I and II or only the proposals in Vol II?

The electronic copy should replicate the contents of the printed proposal.