

2. CONTRACT NUMBER 3. SOLICITATION NUMBER RFP-TTB-04-02 4. TYPE OF SOLICITATION  SEALED BID (IFB)  NEGOTIATED (RFP) 5. DATE ISSUED 11/12/03 6. REQUISITION/PURCHASE NUMBER

7. ISSUED BY CODE Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board Suite 200, 1250 H Street, NW Washington, DC 20005 8. ADDRESS OFFER TO (If other than Item 7)

NOTE: In sealed bid solicitations "offer" and "offeror" mean "bid" and "bidder".

**SOLICITATION**

9. Sealed offers in original and See Sec. L copies for furnishing the supplies or services in the Schedule will be received at the place specified in Item 8, or if handcarried, in the depository located in See Block 7 until 4 PM local time 12/15/03 (Hour) (Date)

CAUTION - LATE Submissions, Modifications, and Withdrawals: See Section L, Provision No. 52.214-7 or 52.215-1. All offers are subject to all terms and conditions contained in this solicitation.

10. FOR INFORMATION CALL: A. NAME Angela Allen B. TELEPHONE (NO COLLECT CALLS) AREA CODE 202 NUMBER 942-1693 EXT. 1670 C. E-MAIL ADDRESS

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**OFFER (Must be fully completed by offeror)**

NOTE: Item 12 does not apply if the solicitation includes the provisions at 52.214-16, Minimum Bid Acceptance Period.

12. In compliance with the above, the undersigned agrees, if this offer is accepted within 120 calendar days (60 calendar days unless a different period is inserted by the offeror) from the date for receipt of offers specified above, to furnish any or all items upon which prices are offered at the price set opposite each item, delivered at the designated point(s), within the time specified in the schedule.

13. DISCOUNT FOR PROMPT PAYMENT (See Section I, Clause No. 52.232-8)  10 CALENDAR DAYS (%)  20 CALENDAR DAYS (%)  30 CALENDAR DAYS (%)  CALENDAR DAYS (%)

14. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AMENDMENTS (The offeror acknowledges receipt of amendments to the SOLICITATION for offerors and related documents numbered and dated):

AMENDMENT NO.	DATE	AMENDMENT NO.	DATE

15A. NAME AND ADDRESS OF OFFEROR CODE FACILITY 16. NAME AND TITLE OF PERSON AUTHORIZED TO SIGN OFFER (Type or print)

15B. TELEPHONE NUMBER AREA CODE NUMBER EXT. 15C. CHECK IF REMITTANCE ADDRESS IS DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE - ENTER SUCH ADDRESS IN SCHEDULE.  17. SIGNATURE 18. OFFER DATE

**AWARD (To be completed by Government)**

19. ACCEPTED AS TO ITEMS NUMBERED 20. AMOUNT 21. ACCOUNTING AND APPROPRIATION

22. AUTHORITY FOR USING OTHER THAN FULL AND OPEN COMPETITION:  10 U.S.C. 2304(c)  41 U.S.C. 253(c) ( ) 23. SUBMIT INVOICES TO ADDRESS SHOWN IN (4 copies unless otherwise specified) ITEM

24. ADMINISTERED BY (If other than Item 7) CODE 25. PAYMENT WILL BE MADE BY CODE

26. NAME OF CONTRACTING OFFICER (Type or print) 27. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (Signature of Contracting Officer) 28. AWARD DATE

SECTION B  
SUPPLIES OR SERVICES AND PRICES/COSTS

B.1. SCOPE The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (Agency) is soliciting proposals from qualified firms possessing the background and expertise necessary to provide external call center support services. The Agency is looking for a supplier that will provide adequate phone coverage (10 hours a day, 5 days a week) while maintaining a superior service level, strong customer service, and accurate and timely reporting.

B.2. BUSINESS PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

a. The Business Proposal will set forth the Offeror's price to perform the required services identified in the Solicitation. Offerors should evaluate all information provided in this Solicitation, particularly in Section C, and submit pricing based on their proposed technical approach.

b. Since each pricing proposal will be evaluated to determine price realism, reasonableness, affordability, probable cost to the Agency, and understanding of the magnitude of effort, as well as being the basis for any price negotiation, it should be accurate, complete and well documented. PRICING INFORMATION IS NOT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE TECHNICAL PROPOSAL.

B.3. CONTRACT PRICING

a. Proposed pricing must be consistent with the requirements of this section as well as Sections L and M. Once a proposal is accepted and subsequent contract awarded, additions or changes to the manner of reimbursement will not be considered. Business Proposals must include and identify all burden (labor and material overhead, General and Administrative expenses, ancillary charges and fees).

b. Offeror's price proposal must include a complete cost breakdown with supporting documentation for all cost elements.

c. Pricing for progress reports, deliverables, and any other requirement of the contract must be included in the proposed total pricing, but must also be broken out separately.

d. Offeror shall propose an hourly rate of pay for the call center personnel. Proposals shall identify the base rate of pay and applicable burdens. Hours of effort by professional staff

must be proposed by category of expertise. The total number of hours required, if any, will be based on Agency need.

e. Travel and per diem costs for trips to both Washington, D.C. and the call center site needed to meet the requirements of this Solicitation must be identified separately. Provide costs for two-day trips to each site.

f. Identify any other charges relevant to this effort.

#### B.4 TYPE OF CONTRACT

The Agency is considering several types of contracts for this project, including cost-plus-fixed fee, cost-reimbursement, cost-plus-hourly fee, cost-plus-incentive fee. Comments are invited, based on the Offeror's experience, as to the contract type which would be most successful and appropriate in similar call center efforts.

[END OF SECTION]

SECTION C  
STATEMENT OF WORK

C.1. INTRODUCTION The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (Agency) administers a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees called the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The TSP was established by the Federal Employees' Retirement System Act of 1986 (FERSA), and is codified primarily at 5 U.S.C. sections 8351 and 8401-8479. The TSP offers Federal employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private sector corporations offer their employees under 401(k) plans. The TSP currently has over 3.1 million participants, with assets of over \$118 billion.

a. The Agency has an interagency agreement with the Department of Agriculture's National Finance Center (NFC) in New Orleans, LA, to provide TSP record keeping services. These services, including a call center, are provided by the Thrift Savings Plan Division (TSPD) of the NFC.

b. The Agency recently implemented a new automated TSP record keeping system which moved the TSP from a monthly-valued plan to a daily-valued plan. The new system and daily valuation increased the number of calls and participant inquiries. As a result, additional call center support is required. This requirement, as well as the need to ensure coverage in the event of a disaster that would close the NFC call center, has provided an immediate opportunity to establish a complementary, parallel call center.

c. Therefore, the Agency requires a Contractor to establish a parallel call center in an area of the country that will not be susceptible to weather related disasters that may occur in the New Orleans area. This parallel call center will also provide coverage of all calls in the event of a disaster that affects the NFC call center operations. The parallel call center will initially handle 20% of the current call volumes and eventually handle 50% of all TSP phone traffic (40% by the end of the first year of the contract). A key element of the future operating plan is for each of these centers to provide disaster recovery relief for the other site.

d. The Agency will utilize the external call center to complement current services in a parallel operation. The Agency is seeking a call center that has experienced and professional agents. The service representatives' actions generated by the incoming calls include but are not limited to:

- Account Maintenance
- Loan Repayments

- Service Requests
- Loan Information

e. The five most common subcategories of call types include:

- Loan status (29%)
- Loan policy questions (14%)
- Loan repayment questions (11%)
- Status/account information (10%)
- Request for forms (10%)

C.2. DESCRIPTION OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED Offerors are requested to respond to all portions of the QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXTERNAL CALL CENTER SERVICES, in Section J, thereby providing a comprehensive business solution to the Agency. If an Offeror believes that its capabilities are limited to specific portions of the solicitation's requirements, the Offeror should so state.

a. Offerors are expected to handle incoming calls only. Workload estimates for incoming calls for the first twelve months of this contract are included in the table below:

Month	Avg Total Program Traffic	% of Program Traffic to Contractor	Total Call Volume to Contractor	Average Handle Time (minutes)
January	210,322	20	42,064	4.5
February	178,945	20	35,789	4.5
March	195,776	30	58,733	4.5
April	221,452	30	66,436	4.5
May	238,711	40	95,484	4.5
June	226,197	40	90,479	4.5
July	249,986	40	99,994	4.5
August	211,165	40	84,466	4.5
September	194,012	40	77,605	4.5
October	231,914	40	92,766	4.5
November	249,318	40	99,727	4.5
December	214,546	40	85,819	4.5

Please note that the volumes going to the Contractor represent only a percentage of total traffic, as indicated by the second column. The Contractor must, however, be able to handle total program traffic in the event of a disaster at the New Orleans site. Further, the above volumes are based on past experience and may change due to the new daily-valued system and the issuance of statements from semi-annually to quarterly.

For the remaining four renewable option years of this contract, the Contractor should assume an annual growth rate of 10 percent and should anticipate handling 50 percent of the total program traffic.

b. The new parallel call center will be open from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm Eastern Time (ET), Monday through Friday. The estimated percent of volume received by day is:

Day of Week	Percent of Traffic
Monday	25
Tuesday	22
Wednesday	19
Thursday	17
Friday	17

c. The current operation is open from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm ET (the closing time will be changed to 8:00 pm ET when the new Contractor is selected). Current call volume percents by interval through- out the day are:

Time Interval	Avg Percent of Traffic
7:00 am	1.03
7:30	1.32
8:00	2.31
8:30	3.61
9:00	4.66
9:30	4.97
10:00	5.27
10:30	6.87
11:00	6.12
11:30	5.24
12:00 pm	5.36
12:30	5.30
1:00	5.01
1:30	5.04
2:00	5.10
2:30	5.51
3:00	4.95
3:30	5.31
4:00	4.71
4:30	4.42
5:00	3.25
5:30	2.38
6:00	1.49
6:30	0.78

d. The Contractor must supply personal computer workstations for each call center employee. These workstations must meet the following minimum requirements:

Processor:	Pentium 4, 2 GHz
Memory:	256 KB RAM
Hard Drive:	40GB
Graphics:	64 MB video card
Monitor:	17" CRT, color

e. The Contractor must have the capability to tape 100% of incoming calls and must safely and securely store all tapes on site for the life of the contract.

f. The Contractor must demonstrate the capability to provide training on-site. The Agency will provide "Train the Trainer" services regarding program and application training, after which the Contractor will be fully responsible for completing this training. The Contractor is expected to provide routine computer-related skills training for all associates assigned to the phones. This training must be submitted to and approved by the Agency. The program must be at least as robust as the current one-day program in use from Phone Pro. The outline of the Phone Pro program will be made available to the selected Contractor if requested.

[END OF SECTION]

SECTION F  
DELIVERIES OF PERFORMANCE

F.1. DELIVERABLES The Contractor shall provide monthly progress reports that summarize significant accomplishments and statistics for each calendar month. Additional management reports (e.g., actual daily call volumes, call durations, service factors attained, hang-ups, and other statistics) that would also be provided by the Contractor should be addressed in the proposal in response to the questionnaire in Section J.

F.2. PERFORMANCE Period of performance. The term of this contract is one year, with four one-year renewable options, as follows: base year, date of award through September 30, 2004; option year 1, October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005; option year 2, October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006; option year 3, October 1, 2006 - September 30, 2007; and option year 4, October 1, 2007 - September 30, 2008. The options may be unilaterally exercised by the Contracting Officer by formal modification to the contract.

F.3. PLACE OF PERFORMANCE The site(s) (and all associates assigned to the telephones) selected to handle these calls must be within the United States, and cannot be co-located with the current facility in New Orleans, LA. The site(s) should be far enough away to function as a disaster recovery option if the New Orleans site is for any reason incapacitated.

[END OF SECTION]



SECTION G  
CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

G.1. CONTRACTUAL INFORMATION

Contractual interpretation and assistance may be obtained by contacting:

Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board  
1250 H Street, NW.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

ATTN: Angela Allen  
Phone: (202) 942-1693

G.2. CONTRACTING OFFICER'S TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVE

The COTR is responsible for administering the performance of work under this contract. In no event, however, will any understanding, agreement, modification, change order, or other matter deviating from the terms of this contract be effective or binding upon the Agency unless formalized by proper contractual documents executed by the Contracting Officer prior to completion of the contract.

The COTR is responsible for: (1) monitoring the Contractor's technical progress, including the surveillance and assessment of performance and recommending to the Contracting Officer changes in requirements; (2) interpreting the scope of work; (3) performing technical evaluation as required; (4) performing technical inspections and acceptances required by this contract; and (5) assisting the Contractor in the resolution of technical problems encountered during the performance. The Contracting Officer is responsible for directing any changes in the terms, conditions, or amounts cited in the contract.

For guidance from the COTR to the Contractor to be valid, it must: (1) be consistent with the description of work set forth in the contract; (2) not constitute new assignments of work or change to the expressed terms, conditions, or specifications incorporated into the contract; (3) not constitute a basis for an extension to the period of performance or contract delivery schedule; and (4) not constitute a basis for any increase in the contract cost.

The COTR may be changed by the Agency at anytime without prior notice to the Contractor. Written notice to the Contractor will be given by the Contracting Officer to effect any change in COTRs.

### G.3. TECHNICAL DIRECTION

Work performed under this contract shall be subject to the technical direction of the COTR. Technical direction, as used herein, will be the overseeing of the Contractor and its staff to insure compliance with all the requirements of the contract. It will include elaboration of the Specifications (Section C) by filling in details or otherwise completing the general description of work set forth by the contract schedule.

If in the opinion of the Contractor, any instruction or direction issued by the COTR is not provided for in any of the provisions of the Contract, the Contractor shall not proceed but shall notify the Contracting Officer in writing within five (5) working days after the receipt of any such instruction or direction and shall request the Contracting Officer to modify the contract accordingly. Upon receiving such notification from the Contractor, the Contracting Officer shall issue an appropriate contract modification or advise the Contractor in writing that, in his/her opinion, the technical direction is within the scope of this clause and does not constitute a change under the Changes Clause of the contract. The Contractor shall thereupon proceed immediately with the direction given.

### G.4. INCORPORATION OF CONTRACTORS PROPOSAL

It is understood and agreed that the Contractor shall, in meeting the requirements of this contract, perform the work in accordance with the proposal to the Agency dated \_\_\_\_\_, provided however, that to the extent that any provisions set forth herein are in conflict or inconsistent with any provisions of said proposal, the provisions of this contract shall be controlling and shall supersede the provisions of said proposal.

### G.5. ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

The order of precedence for interpretation of the terms, conditions, and requirements of this contract shall be as follows:

- a. Cover Sheet (Standard Form 26 or 33);

- b. PART I - THE SCHEDULE of the contract (Sections B through H);
- c. PART II - CONTRACT CLAUSES of the contract (Section I); and,
- d. Contractor's proposal, as clarified and amended.

[END OF SECTION]

SECTION H  
SPECIAL CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

H.1. LANGUAGE English is the only language to be supported for this program.

H.2. HOURS OF OPERATION Under normal conditions, the Contractor will be expected to operate from 11:00 am Eastern Time to 9:00 pm Eastern Time from Monday through Friday. However, at any time when coverage for the New Orleans site is required, the Contractor will be expected to cover the phones from 7:00 am Eastern Time until 9:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

H.3. ADVERTISING

The Contractor must not publicize, advertise, or otherwise announce selection of the Contractor by the Agency without the prior written approval of the Agency.

H.4. RELEASE OF INFORMATION PERTINENT TO THE CONTRACT

The Contractor must not release information or reports relevant to the performance of work under this contract or the work products called for under this contract without the prior written approval of the Agency.

H.5. AGENCY PROPERTY

The Agency reserves the right to supply to the Contractor, as Agency-furnished property, any supplies, equipment and materials determined by the Contracting Officer to be necessary and in the best interest of the Agency in the performance of this contract, provided such property is furnished or the Contractor is notified of the Agency's intent to furnish such property, prior to the Contractor's assuming responsibility for said equipment. Title to all property furnished by the Agency hereunder will vest in the Agency.

H.6. RIGHTS IN DATA

Notwithstanding any other provision contained in this contract, the Agency retains rights to all materials developed under this contract.

H.7 KEY PERSONNEL

The Contractor must include in its proposal, by name and capacity, the key personnel to be assigned to perform and carry

out all phases of work under this contract. Key personnel include the following:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The individuals named above are considered by the Agency to be key personnel and essential for the successful completion of all work assigned under this contract. In the event any individual on the list of key personnel is to be removed or diverted from this contract, the Contractor must (1) notify the Contracting Officer; (2) supply written justification as to why the individual(s) is being removed or diverted; and, (3) provide the name(s) of the proposed substitute or replacement including the education, work experience, etc., of each new person; all at least 14 calendar days in advance of the action.

The Contractor must not, under any circumstances, remove or divert key personnel unless prior written authorization has been granted by the Contracting Officer. The person replacing the key person must have the same or higher qualifications and experience as the person replaced.

#### H.8. EARLY TERMINATION

During the period of the contract, the Agency may terminate this contract upon sixty (60) days written notice to the Contractor.

#### H.9. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information from data files on participant accounts provided to the Contractor is confidential and is subject to the Privacy Act. The Contractor and Contractor personnel shall maintain this information in strict confidence and shall not disclose this information, or any information obtained as a result of performance of this contract, to any person or entity, other than employees or bonafide Contractors of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (Agency), without the prior written approval of the Agency. This provision, or a provision with an identical effect, shall be placed in any subcontracts.

All information concerning the National Finance Center (NFC) operating system provided to the Contractor is proprietary and is subject to the Privacy Act and the Computer Security Act. The Contractor and Contractor personnel shall not disclose this

information to any person or entity or otherwise make any improper use of this information during or after the performance of this contract. The Contractor and Contractor personnel shall maintain this information in strict confidence and shall make no entry into data files, except as is necessary in the performance of this contract. The Contractor and Contractor personnel and their successors are prohibited forever from using this information for personal or business gain, personally or for another, directly or indirectly, without the prior written approval of the Agency. This provision, or a provision with an identical effect, shall be placed in any subcontracts.

H.10. SECURITY All staff assigned to work on this project must undergo a basic security check including a criminal and financial background check. All staff must be U.S. citizens or resident aliens with green cards. Further, all work completed on this project is subject to the Privacy Act. The Contractor must have the capability to shred any and all documents containing a social security number or other Privacy Act information.

[END OF SECTION]

SECTION I  
CONTRACT CLAUSES

The following clauses are hereby incorporated by reference, with the same force and effect as if they were given in full text. Upon request, the Contracting Officer will make the full text available.

(CAUTION): The Offeror is cautioned not to delete or add any other clause or clauses to the following contract clause list. Such an action may cause the offer to be unacceptable. ("FAR Citation" in the following list refers to the Federal Acquisition Regulations [48 CFR Chapter 1.] )

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FAR CITATION</u>
Definitions (DEC 2001) .....	52.202-01
Gratuities (APR 1984) .....	52.203-03
Covenant Against Contingent Fees (APR 1984) .....	52.203-05
Restriction on Subcontractor Sales to the Government (JUL 1995) .....	52.203-06
Anti-Kickback Procedures (OCT 1995) .....	52.203-07
Limitation of Payments to Influence Certain Federal Transactions (JAN 1990) .....	52.203.12
Instructions to Offerors - Competitive Acquisitions (MAY 2001) .....	52.215-01
Audit - Negotiation (JUN 1999) .....	52.215-02
Requirements for Costs or Pricing Data or Information Other than Costs or Pricing Data - Modifications . .	52.215.21
Notice to the Government of Labor Disputes (FEB 1997) .....	52.222-01
Convict Labor (AUG 1996) .....	52.222-03
Contract work Hours and Safety Standards -- Overtime Compensation -- General (JUN 1996) .....	52.222-04
Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act (DEC 1996) .....	52.222-20
Equal Opportunity (APR 2002) .....	52.222-26
Equal Opportunity for Special Disabled and Vietnam Era Veterans (APR 2002) .....	52.222-35
Affirmative Action for Handicapped Workers (JUN 1998)	52.222-36
Service Contract Act of 1965, as Amended (MAY 1989) ..	52.222-41
Drug-Free Workplace (MAR 1989) .....	52.223-06
Privacy Act (APR 1984) .....	52.224-02
Federal, State and Local Taxes (JAN 1991) .....	52.229-03
Cost Accounting Standards (APR 1998) .....	52.230-02
Administration Cost Accounting Standards (APR 1984) ..	52.230-06
Disclosure and Consistency of Cost Accounting Practices (APR 1998) .....	52.230-03
Payments (APR 1984) .....	52.232-01
Discounts for Prompt Payment (FEB 2002) .....	52.232-08

Limitation on Withholding of Payments (APR 1984) .....	52.232-09
Extras (APR 1984) .....	52.232-11
Progress Payments (FEB 2002) .....	52.232-16
Interest (JUN 1996) .....	52.232-17
Assignment of Claims (JAN 1986) .....	52.232.23
Protection of Government Buildings, Equipment and Vegetation (APR 1984) .....	52.237-02
Changes - Cost-Reimbursement (AUG 1987) .....	52.243-02
Changes - Time-and-Materials or Labor Hours (SEPT 2000 .....	52.243-03
Subcontracts (AUG 1998) .....	52.244-02
Competition in Subcontracting (DEC 1996) .....	52.244-05
Property Records (APR 1984) .....	52.245-01
Government Property (Cost-Reimbursement, Time-and- Materials, or Labor-Hours Contracts) (JAN 1986) ..	52.245-02
Termination (Cost-Reimbursement) (APR 1984) .....	52.249-02
SERVICE OF PROTEST (JAN 1985)	

I.1. Protest, as defined in Section 33.101 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation, shall be served on the Contracting Officer by obtaining written and dated acknowledgement of receipt from Angela Allen, the Contracting Officer, Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, Suite 200, 1250 H Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005 Telephone: (202) 942-1693.



SECTION J  
LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXTERNAL CALL CENTER SERVICES**

1. Confirm that you are prepared to work within all the parameters outlined in this RFP. If any present a problem, please explain.
2. Due to the unique culture provided by the Agency to its participants, confirm that you will provide a dedicated customer services unit for the Agency account (i.e., a unit servicing only the Agency account). If no, please explain why or give the minimum number of representatives required to provide a dedicated customer services unit.
3. Indicate the address(es) of the site(s) you plan to use for this project. If you plan to use more than one site, indicate the percentage of total phone traffic to be handled by site. Confirm that all operators will be located at this sites(s).
4. Provide resumes of the key staff you expect to use for this project. Also, certify your understanding that if replacements to this team are made, the resumes of the incoming staff must be reviewed and approved in advance by the Agency's Contracting Officer.
5. The Agency anticipates that the coverage hours for this project will be from 11:00 am Eastern Time to 9:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. The Contractor must be prepared, however, to provide coverage from 7:00 am Eastern time to 9:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, in the event of reduced call handling capabilities at the New Orleans site. Please confirm that you can maintain this level of phone coverage. Please note that the Agency is closed on the following holidays:
  - New Year's Day
  - Martin Luther King's Birthday
  - President's Day
  - Memorial Day
  - Independence Day (July 4)
  - Labor Day
  - Columbus Day
  - Veteran's Day (November 11)
  - Thanksgiving Day
  - Christmas Day

Further, the NFC in New Orleans will be closed on Mardi Gras, and the Contractor will be expected to assume responsibilities for all calls on that day.

6. Describe how you handle communication with your customers. Will there be dedicated account management? Will the Agency have access to operational contacts? Will we have access to our contact person during all hours that the operation is open? Will there be a different contact person assigned according to a particular work shift? Please identify the individuals by name, title, and phone number.
7. Describe the structure and staffing of your customer service office, and complete the following table:
  - A. Number of customer service representatives.
  - B. Average length of experience with your firm.
  - C. Average turnover.
  - D. Expected supervisor and management structure for this requirement.
  - E. Number of representatives per supervisor.
8. Please describe your hiring criteria and hiring process. Include information on the timeframe required to hire representatives for a program like the Agency's, the typical "drop out rate" at the two month mark, and the maximum number of representatives you will be able to hire and train at one time for this program.
9. Describe your call quality assurance processes, including how you validate and report results, and how you use the information to improve performance.
10. Briefly describe your new hire and ongoing training programs. What processes do you have in place to maximize a new representative's performance as quickly as possible? Also, provide information on any training or leadership programs you will utilize for your frontline supervisory/management team.
11. Describe your performance evaluation and coaching programs for customer service representatives.
12. Confirm that 100% percent of calls will be taped and that the Agency will have full electronic access to taped and live calls from the Agency's offices. Also provide the storage capabilities for these tapes; they must be retained for the length of the contract.
13. Describe your processes for managing service levels, efficiency, and cost.

14. Given the workload estimates provided in response to this RFP, how many Full Time Equivalent (FTE) representatives will you have on staff by month for the first year of this contract? How many FTEs will you plan for and staff for in the event of a disaster in New Orleans? How long will it take you to go from your planned staff size to the number of trained representatives needed in the event of a prolonged disaster? How many working hours per week do you use to calculate an FTE?
15. Describe how you will verify that call tracking procedures will be followed for all calls.
16. Describe your procedures for handling customer complaints.
17. How flexible are you in accommodating changes to the services you are providing? For example, if the Agency decides to add new products or delete existing ones what kind of turnaround time is involved in explaining the change to the service representatives and incorporating it into the training?
18. Describe the implementation process and timelines for call center establishment for a project similar in size and complexity to this one.
19. Please confirm that you will be able to comply with the following customer service levels, and provide the calculation you use to derive the following metrics:
  - 80% or more of calls answered within 20 seconds
  - Blocked call percent (includes all internal and external busies) of 2% or lessFurther metrics such as quality rates, customer satisfaction rates, first call resolution, and others may be added to the requirements later in the project.
20. Complete the following table with customer services statistics for a similar client in the same office that is proposed to provide service the Agency:

CUSTOMER SERVICES STATISTICS			
Measure	2002		2003
	Standard	Actual Result	Standard
Average speed to answer			
% of calls answered within 20 seconds			
Call abandonment rate			
Percent of calls that receive a busy signal (internal or external)			

21. Provide references for three (3) clients recently added and two recently lost. References should preferably be companies with call centers of 100 to 500 agents in the financial service sector. Include company name and contact phone number and email address.

**Data Management and Reporting**

22. Systems/Data Quality

a. What policies, procedures, and controls are in place to ensure high quality and security in your systems and data management?

b. Describe your audit trails, your reconciliation procedures, data protection, security, etc. How do you maintain data integrity and quality overall?

23. Does your system utilize encryption technology? If so, please describe what level.

24. How do you respond to technical problems and downtime? Describe your technical support. How do you notify clients of downtime and what processes do you use to remedy the problem.

25. What are your back-up procedures?

26. Please describe your disaster recovery processes for both telephone and computer systems. How would you handle a long-term disaster at your site? How would you handle a long-term disaster at the parallel site in New Orleans? Verify that you will have all of the required architecture (lines, ACD

ports, PCs, etc.) necessary to function as the single call handling site in the event of a disaster in New Orleans.

27. Please describe your system capabilities for tracking and reporting on metrics.
28. Describe the telephony equipment you will use for this contract.
29. Describe and provide samples of your standard reports. Are there additional costs associated with any of these reports? How frequently are these reports available?
30. Can you provide ad hoc reports? Are there any additional costs? Please explain.
31. Are any of the standard reports available electronically?
32. Will the Agency have access to an online ad-hoc query and report-generating tool? If so, please provide a description of the tool and its capabilities.
33. Describe any significant hardware or software upgrades to your systems planned to occur over the next two years. Describe how clients are advised of system upgrades and enhancements. Include timing, fees, and explanation of system impacts. The Agency requires ninety (90) days' notification in writing of system upgrades and enhancements. Please confirm that you can comply with this.
34. Are system upgrades and fixes included in your standard pricing?

END OF SECTION

SECTION K  
REPRESENTATIONS, CERTIFICATIONS

K.1. SOLICITATION PROVISIONS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>FAR CITATION</u>
Certificate of Independent Price Determination (APR 1985)	52.203-02
Certification and Disclosure Regarding Payments to Influence Certain Federal Transactions (APR 1991)	52.203-11
Prohibition of Segregated Facilities (FEB 1999)	52.222-21

K.2. DUNN & BRADSTREET CONTRACTOR ESTABLISHMENT NUMBER

The Offeror is requested to supply below, their DUN and Bradstreet Contractor Establishment Number.

DUNS No.:

K.3. SUBCONTRACTING REPRESENTATION

The Offeror represents that there ( ) will, ( ) will not, be opportunities for subcontracting under any resulting contract.

K.4. TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION (NOV 1988) (FAR 52.204-3)

a. Definitions.

"Common parent," as used in the solicitation provision, means an Offeror that is a member of an affiliated group of corporations that files its Federal income tax returns on a consolidated basis.

"Corporate status," as used in this solicitation provision, means a designation as to whether the Offeror is a corporate entity, an unincorporated entity (e.g., sole proprietorship or partnership), or a corporation providing medical and health care services.

"Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)," as used in this solicitation provision, means the number required by the IRS to be used by the Offeror in reporting Income Tax and other returns.

b. The Offeror is required to submit the information required in paragraphs (c) through (e) of this solicitation provision in order to comply with

reporting requirements of 26 U.S.C. 6041, 6041A, and 6050M and implementing regulations issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). If the resulting contract is subject to reporting requirements described in 4.902(a), the failure or refusal by the Offeror to furnish the information may result in a 20 percent reduction of payments otherwise due under the contract.

c. Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN).

TIN: \_\_\_\_\_.

TIN has been applied for.

TIN is not required because:

Offeror is a nonresident alien, foreign corporation, or foreign partnership that does not have income effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business in the U.S. and does not have an office or place of business or a fiscal paying agent in the U.S.;

Offeror is an agency or instrumentality of a state or local government;

Other, state basis \_\_\_\_\_.

d. Corporate Status.

Corporation providing medical and health care services, or engaged in the billing and collecting of payments for such services;

Other corporate entity;

Not a corporate entity;

Sole proprietorship

Partnership

Hospital or extended care facility described in 26 CFR 501(c)(3) that is exempt from taxation under 26 CFR 501(a).

e. Common Parent.

( ) Offeror is not owned or controlled by a common parent as defined in paragraph (a) of this clause.

( ) Name and TIN of common parent:

K.5. CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, PROPOSED DEBARMENT, AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS (MAY 1989) (FAR 52.209-5)

a. The Offeror certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief, that:

The Offeror and/or any of its Principals:

1. Are ( ) are not ( ) presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or declared ineligible for the award of contracts by any Federal agency;
2. Have ( ) have not ( ), within a 3-year period preceding this offer, been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for: commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, state, or local) contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or state antitrust statutes relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property; and
3. Are ( ) are not ( ) presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated in subdivision (a)(1)(i)(B) of this provision.

The Offeror has ( ) has not ( ), within a 3-year period preceding this offer, had one or more contracts terminated for default by any Federal agency.



- b. "Principals," for the purposes of this certification, means officers; directors; owners; partners; and, persons having primary management or supervisory responsibilities within a business entity (e.g., general manager; plant manager; head of a subsidiary, division, or business segment, and similar positions). This certification concerns a matter within the jurisdiction of an agency of the United States and the making of a false, fictitious, or fraudulent certification may render the maker subject to prosecution under section 1001, title 18, United States Code.
1. The Offeror shall provide immediate written notice to the Contracting Officer if, at any time prior to contract award, the Offeror learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.
  2. A certification that any of the items in paragraph (a) of this provision exists will not necessarily result in withholding of an award under this solicitation. However, the certification will be considered in connection with a determination of the Offeror's responsibility. Failure of the Offeror to furnish a certification or provide such additional information as requested by the Contracting Officer may render the Offeror nonresponsible.
  3. Nothing contained in the foregoing shall be construed to require establishment of a system of records in order to render, in good faith, the certification required by paragraph (a) of this provision. The knowledge and information of an Offeror is not required to exceed that which is normally possessed by a prudent person in the ordinary course of business dealings.
  4. The certification in paragraph (a) of this provision is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when making award. If it is later determined that the Offeror knowingly rendered an erroneous certification, in addition to other remedies available to the Government, the Contracting Officer may terminate the contract resulting from this solicitation for default.

[END OF SECTION]

SECTION L

INSTRUCTIONS, CONDITIONS AND NOTICES TO OFFERORS

L.1. INSTRUCTIONS FOR BUSINESS PROPOSAL

The Offeror shall submit as part of the proposal, a separate enclosure entitled "Business Proposal." The Business Proposal shall include all proposal data required by Sections B and K of this solicitation. Offerors shall submit an original and two copies of the Business Proposal in accordance with the requirements of L.7, and conforming to the following format:

a. Administrative Data

The Offeror shall:

1. Indicate the names and addresses of the cognizant Government Audit Agency and cognizant Inspection Agency, if applicable. (Ex. Securities Exchange Commission, Comptroller of the Currency, or State Agency);
2. State its place of business, including the street address, and the name and address of the owner and operator of facilities other than the Offeror's when it is reasonably expected that such facilities will be used in the performance of the contract. The Offeror shall also include the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number applicable to that name and address; and,
3. Indicate if it has the necessary financial capacity, working capital and other resources necessary to perform the contract without assistance from any outside source (if not, indicate the amount required and the anticipated source.)

b. Offeror Certification

The Offeror shall complete and submit certifications included in section K of this RFP. The successful Offeror may be required to execute a CERTIFICATE OF CURRENT COST OR PRICING DATA as prescribed in FAR 15.804-4.

c. Cost and Pricing Data

Offerors must submit cost and pricing data as required by Section B. The proposed prices must include all costs for which the Offeror expects reimbursement.

L.2. INSTRUCTIONS FOR TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

To facilitate proposal evaluation, the Offeror shall submit as a part of the proposal, a separate enclosure (original and five (5) copies) entitled "Technical Proposal." The contents of this enclosure should be keyed to the Technical Proposal requirements as outlined below. As appropriate, the Technical Proposal shall be in the same topical sequence as this solicitation document. The Technical Proposal must address all requirements of the solicitation with the exception of those in Sections B and K.

By submitting this proposal, the Offeror is granting representatives of the Agency authorization to check references of the Offeror. The Offeror is also granting representatives of the Agency authorization to conduct reference checks of the performance of subcontractors and firms involved in joint venture arrangements. In addition, the Offeror is also granting representatives of the Agency authorization to conduct reference checks of the performance of the personnel and quality of project management offered in support of the contract.

Technical Proposal preparation

Provide a brief synopsis of the proposal. State broadly how the proposal meets the requirements and the intent of the specification. List all exceptions taken to the solicitation requirements and include appropriate rationale for each. Where alternate proposals are made, discuss the controlling principles behind each.

The Technical Proposal shall address, and include specific substantiation to support the Offeror's ability to meet the minimum technical qualifications, as set forth in Section M.

The Technical Proposal shall conform to the other instructions provided elsewhere in this solicitation. The specific areas the Agency will be evaluating, and the relative weight assigned to each area, are included in Section M.

L.3. BUSINESS PROPOSAL PREPARATION

The Business Proposal submitted in response to this solicitation must be under separate cover from the technical submission submitted for consideration. All of the cost aspects of the

offer must be addressed in the Business Proposal. No cost or price information shall be included in the Technical Proposal.

L.4. SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Solicitation interpretation and assistance may be obtained by contacting:

Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board  
1250 H Street, NW.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

ATTN: Angela Allen  
Phone: (202) 942-1693

L.5. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

You are required to submit an original and two (2) copies of the Business Proposal and an original and five (5) copies of the Technical Proposal. The Business Proposals along with the original Technical Proposal should be bound separately from the five copies of the Technical Proposal. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to reproduce and submit the entire solicitation package as part of the proposal.

The place designated for receipt of offers is:

Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board  
1250 H Street, NW.  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20005

L.6. RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be received by the Agency no later than 4:00 p.m., local time, on December 15, 2003. Late proposals will not be considered.

To ensure that the proposal arrives at the proper place on time and to prevent opening by unauthorized individuals, your proposal must be identified on the wrapper as follows:

Proposal Submitted in Response to Solicitation  
No. RFP-TIB-04-02  
Package No. \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

Contents: \_\_\_\_\_ (In accordance with the other instructions, this blank should list either "Business Proposal and Original Technical Proposal" or "Copies of Technical Proposal.")

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: 1250 H Street, NW  
ATTN: Angela Allen

If a receipt is required when delivering a proposal, please prepare a receipt document in advance and present it to the person at the delivery location. The receipt document must state the following:

Proposal submitted in response to Solicitation No. RFP-TIB-04-02

Due Date: December 15, 2003; 4:00 pm, local time  
Date and Time Received:  
Signature

(Provide adequate space on the form to allow a time and date stamp.)

If the above format is not followed, no receipt of proposals will be given. Please do not ask for an exception, as none will be granted.

L.7. ALTERNATE PROPOSALS

Offerors may submit more than one proposal in response to this solicitation provided each proposal meets all requirements specified herein. If alternate proposals are submitted, each such proposal must be clearly labeled and identified as such on the cover page.

L.8. TYPE OF CONTRACT

Please refer to Section B.

L.9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written questions are requested to be submitted no later than thirteen (13) days after the issuance date of this document.

L.10. MARKING OF INFORMATION TO RESTRICT DISCLOSURE AND USE OF DATA

A proposal may include data, such as a technical design or concept or financial and management plan, which the Offeror does not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the Agency for any purpose other than evaluation of the proposal. If an Offeror wishes so to restrict its proposal, it shall mark the title page with the following legend:

This data, furnished in connection with Request for Proposals No. RFP-TIB-04-02, shall not be disclosed outside

the Agency and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed in whole or in part for any purpose other than to evaluate the proposal; provided that, if a contract is awarded to this Offeror as a result of or in connection with the submission of this data, the Agency shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the contract. This restriction does not limit the Agency's right to use the information contained in the data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction is contained in sheets.

The Offeror shall mark each sheet of data, which it wishes to restrict with the following:

Use or disclosure of proposal data is subject to the restriction of the Title Page of this Proposal.

Proposals or quotations of subcontractors which are included as part of a proposal submitted by a prime-Offeror may be marked in a manner consistent with the clause above.

Notwithstanding the above, records, or data bearing such a legend as in the paragraph above, may be otherwise subject to release under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 USC 552, as amended. It is noted, however, that absent a request for such records or data pursuant to the statutory provisions (the Freedom of Information Act, 5 USC 552, as amended), and the subsequent determination of releasability, the legend shall be honored in accordance with the above.

#### L.11. DISCOUNTS

Prompt payment discounts will not be considered in the evaluation of offers. However, any offered discount will form a part of the award, and will be taken if payment is made within the discount period indicated in the offer by the Offeror. As an alternative to offering a prompt payment discount in conjunction with the offer, Offerors awarded a contract may include prompt payment discounts on individual invoices.

#### L.12. TELEGRAPHIC PROPOSAL

Telegraphic proposals will not be considered, although proposals may be modified by telegraphic notice provided such notice is actually received prior to the closing date and time.

L.13. INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Execution of this proposal shall constitute a certification by the Offeror that it is complying with all state and Federal laws with respect to insurance requirements.

L.14. PAYMENT BY ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER

The resultant Contractor may be required to complete a Payment Information Form, which will allow for the electronic transfer of payment funds using the Federal Reserve Communication System.

L.15. MINIMUM ACCEPTANCE PERIOD

Offers allowing less than 120 calendar days in the "offer" portion of (SF) 33, Section A, for acceptance by the Agency will be rejected as unacceptable.

L.16. INCURRED COSTS

The Agency is not liable for any costs incurred by the Offerors in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation.

L.17. PRE-AWARD SURVEY/VISITATION/POST AWARD CONFERENCE

The Agency reserves the right to visit all qualified Offerors to inspect their facilities and operation prior to any determination of contract award under this solicitation. In lieu thereof, the Agency may opt to inspect the apparent Contractor's facility prior to award of contract. Subsequent to award, a post award conference may be conducted either at the Agency or at the Contractor's facility.

[END OF SECTION]

SECTION M  
EVALUATION FACTORS

M.1. GENERAL

This section sets forth the criteria to be used for the evaluation and award of all offers. These criteria will be applied to each offer to determine the successful Offeror. The evaluation process is described below.

M.2. EVALUATION OF OFFERORS

The Agency will select an Offeror for award in accordance with FAR Part 15 and Agency Source Evaluation and Selection Procedures. The significant features of this procedure are:

- a. The Agency will evaluate cost/pricing using the information provided in response to Section B;
- b. The technical evaluation panel will evaluate technical responses; and
- c. The Agency, in addition to the cost/price and technical evaluations, will consider any award decision in light of the responsibility factors set forth in FAR Part 9.

M.3. EVALUATION FACTORS

This section sets forth the criteria to be used for the evaluation of each timely offer to determine the successful Offeror. The evaluation of offers will consist of technical and cost evaluation. Only proposals deemed to be technically acceptable will receive further consideration. The Agency is committed to providing the highest level of customer service and satisfaction. Offerors should be aware of the fact that only the highest caliber of quality and service will be accepted. This commitment to customer satisfaction and service will serve as a significant evaluation factor as well as serving as the justification for continuing the contract.

M.4. EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

The Agency will make award to that responsible Offeror whose proposal conforms to the solicitation and is most advantageous to the Agency, cost or price and other factors considered. For this solicitation, technical quality is more important than cost. As proposals become more equal in their technical merit, the evaluation of cost becomes more important. An evaluation of each proposal will be made in the technical area, and if technically acceptable, in the cost area. The technical evaluation carries a



seventy-five percent (75%) weight towards the contract award, and the cost/price evaluation carries a twenty-five percent (25%) weight. The total score will be determined by combining the final technical score and the final cost/price score.

M.5. MINIMAL TECHNICAL FACTORS FOR AWARD

The technical proposal must demonstrate compliance with the minimum technical factors listed below in order to be considered for award. Proposals, which do not conform, to the technical requirements of this section will be rejected by the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) before technical evaluation.

Offerors must demonstrate and certify compliance with the following minimum criteria:

- a. That any and all sites (including personnel) used to process the calls by the Contractor be within the continental United States.
- b. That the call center(s) site(s) be sufficiently removed from New Orleans to be considered an acceptable disaster recovery alternative in the event that call processing is suspended for any period of time in New Orleans.
- c. That the Contractor has prior experience in operating similar call center programs in the financial services industry.
- d. That the Contractor provide a dedicated customer service unit with staff working solely on the contract with the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.

M.6. Technical Evaluation - 100 points.

Upon determining Offeror compliance with the minimum technical criteria identified above, the TEP will evaluate proposals for technical merit using the evaluation criteria identified below. Evaluation criteria are listed in descending order of importance.

A. Operational Management Capability - 75 points

The successful Offeror must be able to demonstrate knowledge of best practices for operating call centers and must have experience in applying these practices in the operation of their call centers. This experience must include financial programs and must involve call centers of approximately the same size as the proposed center.

There are three areas where the Contractor must demonstrate expertise. These are people management, process management, and technology management.

## 1. People Management

Under this category, Offeror will be evaluated on their ability to select, train, and manage a team of individuals that meet or exceed expected levels of performance. Specific elements of people management include:

a. Hiring. We will review the proposal to determine plans for recruiting and selecting staff for the program. We will evaluate such items as turnover rates, average tenure, and amount of supervision to determine the emphasis placed on the selection and development of front line personnel. We will also review total hiring capabilities to ensure that staffing requirements can be met on a timely basis.

b. Training. We will evaluate the training program Contractors are currently using for front line associates, as well as their planned training program for this requirement. Our review will include not only new hire training, but also the commitment made to ongoing training for experienced customer service representatives. We will also evaluate training plans for front line supervisors.

c. Coaching and performance evaluation. These activities are crucial to effective call center management. We will review Contractors' plans for evaluating the performance of customer service representatives, coaching customer service representatives, and maximizing the performance contribution of each individual.

d. Management expertise. We will review resumes of key members of the management team to ensure they have the background and experience required to successfully direct the operation and meet program objectives.

## 2. Process Management

The best run call centers are process intensive. It is through these processes that they ensure consistent levels of service. We will review the following processes of the Contractors.

a. Workforce management. Workforce management processes include forecasting, staffing, scheduling, real time management, and service level management. We will evaluate these processes to determine how proactive the organization is and how strong its emphasis is on planning as opposed to reacting.

b. Quality assurance. No matter how good an organization is at people management, it is the quality assurance practices that determine how consistent the organization delivers services. We will assess the processes used by each Offeror to determine how effective it will be at creating a consistent responsive experience for all callers.

c. Complaint management. Complaints are a fact of life in call centers and the best ones recognize them as an opportunity to turn around customer perceptions and for improving processes. We will assess the Offerors' plans for handling complaints and improving processes based on those complaints.

d. Reporting. Call centers take different approaches to reporting results. Our review will include an assessment of Offerors' reporting plans to ensure that they will provide the key metrics that produce a complete picture of the call center's performance.

### 3. Technology Management

For this project, the Agency will provide most of the application technology. The Contractor, however, will be responsible for telephony equipment and will need to connect to various systems and maintain desktop tools. We will evaluate the Offerors on the following skills:

a. Flexibility. Over time, changes will need to be made to the technical architecture to accommodate changes in the business. We will review responses to ensure that the Offerors will be able to fulfill these change requests in a timely manner.

b. Ease of access. Performance data on operation of the call center will originate from Contractor systems. Reports will be required; however, our preference is to have electronic access to this information whenever possible. Contractors providing electronic access will receive a higher score.

c. Telephony capabilities and expertise. We will review information provided on ACD and call taping systems to ensure these systems can adequately process calls in the manner required by this project.

d. Disaster recovery and backup procedures. We will review disaster recovery procedures from two different perspectives. The first is the view of the Offerors' operations, and the systems and procedures they have in place to keep their operation up and running as consistently as possible. Our second view will be the ability for the

Offerors to act as the disaster recovery site if the New Orleans call center incurs a disaster. We will also review the backup procedures in place to ensure that data is not lost.

e. System security. We will review security control and audit procedures in place to ensure quality and system security.

B. Account Management Capability - 25 points

In a call center outsourcing arrangement, the Contractor names an account manager or account management team to act as the interface with the client. This represents a vital communication link, and we will review the following items to gauge the level of account management expertise offered by Offerors.

1. Communication protocols. We are interested in locating an Offeror that takes a proactive approach in providing relevant and accurate information. We will assess this through the Offerors' communication plans and the processes they have in place for responding to client requests.

2. Program implementation. The start-up of a program is critical to long-term success. We will assess Contractors' capabilities in not only the timeliness of their plans but in the amount of communication they expect to provide throughout the process.

M.7. Cost/Price Evaluation.

A maximum of 25 points will be assigned to price, to be determined as follows: The lowest-priced, technically acceptable proposal will be given a score of 25 points; higher priced proposals which are technically acceptable will be given fewer points in accordance with the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Lowest Priced Proposal}}{\text{Higher Priced Individual Offer}} \times 25 = \text{Business Score}$$

M.8. PAST PERFORMANCE

The Agency shall consider Offeror's past performance on similar assignments, to assess the relative capabilities of competing Offerors.

M.9. AWARD

While the total score shall be an important factor in selection for award of a contract, the Agency will award any contract

resulting from this solicitation to that Offeror presenting the most advantageous offer to the Agency, all factors considered.

The Agency may reject any or all offers, accept other than the lowest offer, and waive informalities and minor irregularities in offers received.

The Agency may award a contract on the basis of initial offers received, without discussions. Therefore, each initial offer should contain the Offeror's best terms from a price and technical standpoint.

[END OF SECTION]

///NOTHING FOLLOWS\\

December 1, 2003

**Amendment #01**  
**TIB-RFP-04-02 - Parallel Call Center**  
**Questions and Answers**

1. Section J: (page 19) "References should preferably be companies with call centers of 100 to 500 agents in the financial service sector."

Q: Is the "100 to 500 agents" referring to the number of customers that may utilize the call center, or is it the number of customer service agents answering the incoming calls?

**A: The "100 to 500 agents" refers to the number of customer service agents answering incoming calls.**

2. We are a company based out of New Jersey, with a very large offshore call center.

Q: Can we as a company be considered to bid for this RFP?

**A: In order for a bid to be considered, it must meet the minimum technical factors outlined on page 32 (i.e., the call center must be in the United States).**

3. A request for a complete spec sheet of all your communications presently in working condition from the type of PBX you are using to the number of employees. Please include Voice Data and fax information.

**A: The current call center's workload is not part of this contract. The contractor's configuration may differ from that of our current call center.**

4. Q: Will there be a formal conference call to review questions/updates, etc.?

**A: No, questions and answers will be handled via e-mail and posted on the [www.frtib.gov](http://www.frtib.gov) web site.**

5. On page 7, items D and F regarding personal work stations and on-site training.

Q: Will the personal work stations be an expense charged to your group and included in pricing? Current computer set-up will not suffice?

**A: All costs to set up and operate the program should be included in the offeror's pricing.**

Q: After "Train the Trainer" has completed. The contractor is responsible for completing the training in-house for the purpose of training our own reps... Is that correct?

**A: Yes, this is correct.**

6. Q: Can [our company] bid a firm fixed effort in the manner that we typically bid in the commercial sector and be evaluated as a responsive bidder?

**A: We are not precluding a firm fixed price offers; however workload handled by the contractor can fluctuate based on a number of reasons (demand increases, disaster recovery requirements, etc). Any pricing structure that is proposed for this program must automatically account for these changes in workload. Pricing arrangements that rely upon negotiation to address changes in workload will not be considered.**

7. Page 2. "Type of Contract" The Solicitation stipulates a cost-plus fixed fee, cost-reimbursement, cost-plus hourly fee and cost-plus-incentive fee type contracts for the project.

Q: Can [our company] propose a Firm Fixed Price Contract for the subject Solicitation?

**A: We are not precluding firm fixed price offers; however workload handled by the contractor can fluctuate based on a number of reasons (demand increases, disaster recovery requirements, etc). Any pricing structure that is proposed for this program must automatically account for these changes in workload. Pricing arrangements that rely upon negotiation to address changes in workload will not be considered.**

8. Page 19, Section J-21. The solicitation requests references for two (2) clients recently lost. Refer-

ences should preferably be companies with call centers of 100 to 500 agents in the financial sector.

Q: Can we just state none?

**A: Wherever possible, the Offeror should provide references for two (2) clients recently lost. We would prefer those references come from the financial sector. If no clients from the financial sector have been lost, we would like references from other industries. If no clients have been lost, the Offeror should state "none".**

9. Page 28, Section L.9 "Written Questions." The Solicitation requests that written questions be submitted no later than thirteen (13) days after the issuance date of the Solicitation, which is November 12.

Q: Can questions be submitted as a need arises, but no later than, thirteen days after the issuance date of the Solicitation?

**A: Yes, questions can be submitted as they arise but not more than thirteen (13) days after the issuance date of November 12, 2003.**

10. IT requirements for graphics.

Q: Will there be a great deal of graphics required and what type of graphics will be required?

**A: The graphics consist primarily of the GUI screens that will be used by the service representatives in responding to participant queries. A graphics card is required on workstations for the GUI to work properly.**

11. Will any additional forms, other than 85-P, require completion prior to being granted security clearance?

**A: The unique security clearance forms required by the record keeper will be provided following contract award.**

12. How much time is required to process a security clearance application? Will the account team staff be



given an interim security clearance if the clearance process exceeds a predetermined time period?

**A: It takes approximately three to six weeks to process a security clearance. Interim clearances will be provided upon receipt of completed forms.**

13. Can the account team staff perform any duties on the contract prior to receiving a clearance from the government?

**A: Yes. However, no access to participant data will be authorized until the security clearance forms have been submitted and interim clearances established.**

14. Does the FRTIB intend to have the current Interactive Voice Response and/or Call Telephony Integration infrastructure available to agents at the alternate call center or will the agents be supported by the existing NFC infrastructure?

**A: Both call centers will be supported by a common IVR, but will utilize their own internal telephony infrastructure to handle the calls.**

15. Will the alternate call center also accept call-center-related trouble calls or will all trouble calls come to the primary call center in New Orleans?

**A: Incoming calls will not be routed by type. The parallel call center will receive calls of all types.**

16. Does the FRTIB want the alternate and primary call centers to act as one call center and appear as one call center to the participant and to the FRTIB?

**A: Yes. The location of the agents responding to the calls should be transparent to the caller.**

17. Is the referenced 120 days the period of time from proposal submission that our cost figures are valid? (Reference Section A.1 (SF33 & L.15, pg 30))

**A: Yes.**

18. What is meant by "Hours of effort by professional staff must be proposed by category of expertise?" (Reference Section B.3.d, pgs 1,2)

**A: The Offeror must determine what labor categories (also provide a definition of each) and hours in each category are required to do the work.**

19. Would the contractor be traveling to the primary call center in New Orleans? (Reference Section B.3.e, pg 2)

**A: The contractor will visit the Board, and joint meetings at other locations may occur as proposed by the Offeror as proposed in it proposal.**

20. How many travelers should cost be based on?

**A: The Offeror must make that determination.**

21. Is there a date that after contract award the new parallel call center must be in production? (Section C.1.c, pg 3 & C.2.a.- Table, pg 4)

**A: The Offeror is expected to propose a date or time frame.**

22. Will the parallel call center need to reach 40% of TSP phone traffic by the end of the first 4 months (D.2.a Table) or by the end of the first year (C.1.c)?

**A: The Board anticipates the call volumes to increase, and it plans to have the new parallel call center pick up that growth as well as the volume of calls that the current call center does not have the staff to answer. The Table reflects the rate at which the parallel call center should plan for growth (i.e., 40% of TSP phone calls by the beginning of the fifth month of operation), but the actual call volume growth rate will depend on actual experience, and the rates shown in the Table may change.**

23. Does the RFP mean that initially the parallel call center will handle 20% of current TSP calls, and by the end of the first year, 40% of all TSP calls (C.1.c)?

**A: The parallel call center is expected to handle 20% of all calls initially, and 40% of the calls for the fifth through twelfth months of the first year.**

24. The table on page 4 of the RFP shows call volume, by month, for the total system and to the contractor.

a. Are these expected/average call volumes and handle times for the agents or the IVR?

**A: These are calls to agents.**

b. If the volumes are for the IVR, what are expected volumes and times for the agents?

**A: N/A.**

c. If the volumes are for agents only, and the answer to General Question 1 is that the alternate call center will have separate IVR's, what are the call volumes for the IVRs?

**A: There will be a single IVR system, so the overall IVR call volumes are irrelevant.**

25. Does the FRTIB expect the alternate call center to handle all types of calls on a full time basis or would the alternate center agents specialize in certain types of calls, with the ability to handle all calls in an overflow of disaster situations? (Reference Section C.2.a)

**A: The parallel call center will handle all types of calls.**

26. Does FRTIB desire to see consolidated call center statistics for either sites, (New Orleans & the alternate) or separate sets of statistics for only the alternate site. (Reference Section F.1, page 7)

**A: Separate statistics for each site will be required.**

27. "The Contractor must, however, be able to handle total program traffic in the event of a disaster at

the New Orleans site." And Mardi Gras reference (Section C.2.a, pg 4 & Section J, Question 5, pgs 16,17)

a. Does the FRTIB anticipate that response times will be the same as at normal times?

**A: The Board expects call blocking percentages to be the same as normal times. We prefer to have service levels also be the same; however, we will consider alternative proposals from Offerors.**

b. Section J states, "List of Attachments," are there any other attachments?

**A: No.**

28. Define "long-term disaster." In other words, what is the extent of time allowed before the primary site can recover and resume its functions. (Reference Section J, Question 26, pg 19)

**A: For the purposes of this proposal, consider long term to be 48 hours.**

29. Where will the data used by the alternate call center reside for day-to-day operations?

**A: At the record keeper's data center.**

30. Will the primary call center and the alternate call center use a single source for this data?

**A: Yes.**

31. If the site for the data is down, where will the data reside?

**A: Assuming this refers to a disaster situation, the data will be at the record keeper's disaster recovery site (currently Philadelphia, PA).**

32. What are "cognizant Government Audit Agency and cognizant Inspection Agency?" (Reference Section L.1.a.1, pg 25)

**A: Those Federal agencies that the Board may contract with to audit and/or inspect the parallel call center billings and operations.**

33. The first paragraph states, "the technical proposal shall be in the same topical sequence as this solicitation document. The Technical Proposal must address all requirements of the solicitation with the exception of those in Sections B and K. Later in the second paragraph under Technical Proposal preparation, it states, "The technical proposal shall address, and include specific substantiation to support the Offeror's ability to meet the minimum technical qualifications, as set forth in Section M."

a. Does the Government intend that we respond to RFP sections A, C, F, G, H, I, J, and L, some of which are for information only?

**A: The Offeror must make that determination.**

b. There is significant overlap between RFP sections J&M. Which questions in Section J apply to which evaluation criteria in Section M?

**A: The Offeror must make that determination.**

c. Would it be responsive to refer from our proposal Section M to information in our proposal Section J, rather than repeating the same information in a different sequence in Section M?

**A: Yes, where the questions and context overlap, you can refer to previous answers.**

34. How long is the Train the Trainer curriculum and where would vendor be required to travel?

**A: This has not been determined yet, although the training would likely take place at the Board's offices in Washington, DC.**

35. Is the training curriculum currently developed? In what format is hard or soft copy?

**A: The training curriculum has not been developed yet, but when it is it will be provided in both hard and soft copy.**

36. How long is the initial agent-training phase?

**A: The duration will depend on the experience of the contractor and its agents.**

37. Does training require a nesting period post classroom?

**A: The program will require well-trained professionals to handle the calls. The Board will depend upon the contractor to recommend and install any processes or follow any methods that will meet this requirement, including approaches for training replacement novice agents.**

38. How many applications will agents be required to interface with?

**A: There will be four provided applications plus the Thrift Savings Plan's web site. The contractor should also provide any additional applications required to conduct day-to-day business (e.g., email, word processing).**

39. Is the recording requirement 100% for all voice and data transactions?

**A: The requirement is 100% for all voice transactions, incomings as well as call-backs. Data recording is not a requirement since the system requires documentation of each call through one of the provided applications.**

40. Are there any back office requirements, e.g. callbacks, faxing or data processing?

**A: Yes. Call-backs may be required. Capabilities for faxing and processing transactions are included in the software applications provided.**

41. Are there any unique licensing requirements for agents?

**A: No.**

42. Are there any additional security requirements e.g. segregated space?

**A: The contractor should provide a facility that provides controlled access to authorized personnel only and ensures that computer screens or documents cannot be accessed by anyone who is not authorized.**

43. Because the volumes are relatively small, will it be possible to increase the speed of the ramp up to the 50% level sooner than planned so that the contractor will be able to achieve some economies of scale?

**A: Since this program involves a call split, we will adhere to the call split schedule provided. However, actual call volume increases will dictate the ramp-up speed.**

44. Would you please consider using a GSA Schedule contract for this procurement? This makes the contracting and pricing more efficient for both parties.

**A: Using only GSA Schedule contracts would limit competition. However, an Offeror may propose use of a GSA Schedule in its proposal.**

45. Please clarify from (C.2.e, pg 6) capability to tape 100% of incoming calls. Will all calls need to be recorded or is this just the ability to do so? If 100% are required to be recorded, is that voice only or voice and data? How long is the requirement to retain the records "real-time?"

**A: All calls will need to be recorded, and records need to be maintained for at least five years. Data recording is not a requirement since the system requires documentation of each call through one of the provided applications.**

46. Section J.22.b, pg 19: Please define and clarify what types of audit trails to be explained?

**A: Although the applications provided have internal audit controls, the Offeror should address any audit control items such as: Confirmation that all**

**calls are accounted for. Were procedures for processing transactions followed. Who accepted the call. Who did the actual transaction and when. Were call-backs made timely. Were trouble calls appropriately escalated to a supervisor.**

47. Section B.4, pg 2, states that the Agency is considering several types of contracts for this project.

a. Is the Agency expecting pricing for the recommended contract type as well as comments?

**A: Yes.**

b. What is the expected contract award date that the Agency is working toward?

**A: We are working toward a January 2004 award date.**

c. What is the anticipated go live date for the parallel call center?

**A: The go-live date will depend upon the contractor's ability to prepare for the program.**

48. Section C.1.c, pg 3, states that the contractor is to initially receive 20% of the current call volumes and pick up an additional 40% by the end of the first year of the contract. How will this traffic be directed to the contractor? Would it be through call allocation, overflow, etc?

**A: This will be a post-IVR percent allocation. The contractor is expected to handle 20% of the call volume initially then ramp up to 40% of the call volume, not an additional 40% as stated in the question.**

49. Section C.2.a, pg 4: The chart on pg 4, shows an average handle time of 4.5 minutes. Would you please provide the average handle times by call type specified under C.1.d in the SOW?

**A: We do not have that information.**

50. Section H.7, pg 12, states that the contractor must include the names of key personnel, but does not



indicate which roles require key personnel. Will the Agency specify or will the contractor be expected to identify key personnel?

**A: The contractor will be expected to identify those roles and individuals that will be considered key personnel.**

51. Section J.5, pg 17, stated NFC will be closed on Mardi Gras. What is a typical call volume on this day(s) that should be anticipated by the contractor? Which day(s) does NFC close for Mardi Gras?

**A: The actual date of Mardi Gras changes every year. It occurs the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday each year. Expect a call volume of about 9,000.**

52. Section C.2.f, pg 6, discusses training requirements. Does training differ by call type and if so, what is the training length per call type? Will FRTIB also provide training curriculum to the contractor?

**A: Training covers all call types. The Board will provide the curriculum and train the trainer sessions.**

53. Would the Agency please verify that the call handling application will be extended to the contractor? If so, what is the current application software?

**A: The contractor will have access to all necessary software applications which will be provided by the Board, but is expected to provide all telephony equipment except the IVR. The system used to answer call inquiries is proprietary.**

54. Please identify the type of data link required to support the extension of the application.

**A: That will be determined following contract award.**

55. Other than the call handling applications, are there other platforms/databases that need to be accessed? If yes, please identify those platforms/databases.

**A: The only other applications to be accessed are the Board's web site and the ThriftLine (IVR).**

56. Would there be any need to integrate contractor applications to the FRTIB data network? If so, which systems need to be integrated?

**A: Contractor applications would not need to be integrated with the Board's network. However, electronic interfaces would be expected to be established for email, document transfer, etc.**

57. Does the FRTIB currently maintain a data warehouse to support the call center? Please describe architecture and use.

**A: No.**

58. What is the current data networking infrastructure (i.e. CISCO, Nortel)?

**A: The current network is supported by several contractors and technologies that will be provided following contract award.**

59. C.2, pg 4, Description of Work, clarifies that the contractor will handle incoming calls only. Please identify which teleco carrier will be used.

**A: To be determined following contract award.**

60. Please clarify that calls will not have to be transferred back to the Agency.

**A: In rare cases, we expect that a call will have to be referred to the Board for personal attention from a Board staff member (the call itself would not be transferred out of the call center). Calls referred to the Board should follow the escalation procedures established based on the contractor's organization; these generally would be: agent, supervisor, call center manager, Board staff.**

61. Are the network carrier functions currently managed under FTS 2001?

**A: Some, but not all.**

62. Is there currently any network prompting or IVR managing the calls prior to routing the calls to NFC?

**A: Yes, there is an IVR handling the calls prior to routing to an agent.**

63. Is the contractor required to have a "hot" backup site capable of handling 100% of the call volume in the event of a disaster at the existing New Orleans site? If so, is there a requirement for the facility to be some number of miles away?

**A: The contractor must be able to handle total program traffic in the event of a disaster at the New Orleans site. No mileage requirement is stipulated, but we expect that the site be sufficiently removed from New Orleans to be considered an acceptable disaster recovery alternative.**

64. Is the contractor expected to maintain an 80/20 SLA in case of a disaster at the existing New Orleans site?

**A: The contractor is expected to block 2% or less of calls when covering for a disaster in New Orleans. It is our hope to maintain an 80/20 SLA, but we will consider other options offered by the Offeror.**

65. Will the agency guarantee the call volumes to be at least what specified in the RFP?

**A: The volumes are best faith estimates, but do not represent guarantees.**

66. How will the call volume allocation be made: percentage-based at the network level or some other way?

**A: The volume allocation will be percentage based post-IVR.**

67. Please explain in more detail the requirement for contractor to provide full electronic access to taped and live calls.

**A: We expect all calls to be taped, and we expect to be able to access from a remote office any taped call that requires review.**

68. Please provide justification for the personal computer workstation minimum requirements for each call center employee (Pentium 4, 2 GHz, 256 MB RAM, 40 GB hard drive, 64MB video card, 17" CRT color monitor).

**A: These are the minimum requirements for workstations for proper operation of the applications that will be provided for the call center agents.**

69. Will the agency provide the contractor with an agent desktop customer service application? Please provide details.

**A: As stated in the RFP, the Board will provide all software applications required to access participant data.**

70. How will the contractor's customer service staff access loan information? Who is responsible for establishing connectivity to the database? Please provide details about the database and the required connectivity.

**A: Information will be accessed through applications developed and maintained by the Board. Any additional applications (e.g., word processing, email) should be provided and supported by the contractor.**

71. Please explain the workflow of a typical call by each call type.

**A: For all calls, we start by verifying the caller. We then access applications provided by the Board to deliver information and/or order materials. The call is then documented.**

72. Please provide more detail about the agent training requirements. Will the agency provide the training manuals and other necessary documentation?

**A: The Board will provide train-the-trainer services to the contractor for program and application**

training, including periodic training required for program enhancements. Training materials will be supplied, and the contractor is welcome to add to these materials to enhance the training process. Soft skills training is mandatory, and is to be supplied by the contractor. Soft skills training must be at least as robust as the current one-day program described in the attachment. The contractor is responsible for handling any on-going and remedial training for agents.

73. Is the contractor responsible for the application support? How often are the changes made?

**A. No, the Board will provide support and updates for its applications as necessary.**

74. Will the contractor be responsible for the toll charges?

**A: No. Toll charges for official calls will be billed to the Board as Other Direct Charges.**

75. Which phone carrier does the agency use to route calls to the existing New Orleans site?

**A: Local call routing is provided by BellSouth.**

76. Has the agency considered a use of IVR (Interactive Voice Response) unit to handle routine inquiries?

**A: An IVR is currently in use and will continue to be used.**

77. Will the contractor be responsible for the forms fulfillment function? How are the forms delivered: mail or email, regular or stock paper, etc.

**A: Yes, through the applications provided. Forms are delivered by fax and mail.**

78. Section C.2.f. mentions a one-day training program by Phone Pro and states that an outline of the program will be made available to the selected Contractor if requested. Can this outline be made available to the bidders before the proposals are due? Can you provide more details concerning the existing

training program? Are there other components to the program? If so, how long is the program? How much time is spent in a classroom environment versus monitoring live calls and shadowing experienced associates?

**A:** The Board will provide train-the-trainer services to the contractor for program and application training. Training materials will be supplied, and the contractor is welcome to add to these materials to enhance the training process. Soft skills training is mandatory, and is to be supplied by the contractor. Soft skills training must be at least as robust as the current one-day program in use from Phone Pro. The contractor is responsible for handling any on-going and remedial training for agents. The training program developed by Phone Pro is one day long and covers only the soft skills part of training; a description of the training (an outline is not available at this time) is attached.

79. Section M.6.A.3 states that "the Agency will provide most of the application technology." What applications will be provided?

**A:** As stated in the RFP, the Board will provide the applications required to access participant data. Any additional applications (e.g., word processing, email) should be provided and supported by the contractor.

80. Can you please describe how call routing will occur? Is an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system currently in use? Will calls be routed to the parallel call center after being processed by the IVR?

**A:** Calls will be routed by an existing IVR system between the call centers.

81. Is there an escalation path for calls that cannot be answered by the associates within the parallel call center?

**A:** Agents in the parallel center will be able to handle most calls. For those few calls that require further assistance, the escalation path depends on the

**contractor's organization, but generally would be:  
agent, supervisor, call center manager, Board staff.**

82. Will the communications lines into the parallel call center be provided by the Agency (through FTS2001 or some other method) or should we supply that cost in our Business Proposal?

**A: The Board will provide the external dedicated communications lines.**

83. Will the parallel call center be expected to handle other inquiry channels such as email and postal mail? If so, do you have a projected volume?

**A: The parallel agency will handle only inbound calls.**

84. Will the Agency specify the labor categories? Will they be subject to the Service Contract Act?

**A: The Offeror must determine what labor categories will be required to do the work. As stated in the RFP, this contract is subject to the Service Contract Act.**

85. Will prospective contractors be able to visit the current call center?

**A: No.**

86. Is this a small business set aside?

**A: No.**

87. Is the implementation of the call center infrastructure included in this contract or is that an expense that is put solely on the contractor?

**A: Implementation costs for the call center, other than those identified in the RFP and herein as borne by the government, are contractor expenses.**

88. During an emergency would the contractor be required to ramp up employees to meet the increased demand?

**A: Yes. We are looking for the Offerors to provide creative solutions for this situation.**

89. Do you intend for any of the existing employees to work in the redundant call center or is it to be staffed entirely by the contractor?

**A: The parallel call center is to be staffed entirely by the contractor.**

90. In section J on page 16, it references "list of attachments."

Q: Were there any other attachments relative to the 34 questions?

**A: No.**

91. Please confirm that written questions are due on 11/25.

Q: 1. Is that by a certain time of day; and  
2. Can the questions be sent by e-Mail or FAX, or do they have to be mailed?

**A: Questions were due no later than 4:00 PM on November 25, 2003, and were to be submitted by email only.**

92. What would be the purpose of travel. Should it be for the contractor to visit the Board in D.C.?

**A: The purpose of the travel is for joint call center meetings and training. The contractor will visit the Board, and joint meetings may occur as proposed by the Offeror in its proposal.**

93. Will the contract type and pricing structure be altered; and when will the amendment to reflect that change be released?

**A: We do not plan to alter the contract type or pricing structure in the RFP.**



Attachment

## Telephone Skills Course Outline

### **Laying the Groundwork to Understand Service**

The foundation for the tele-service training is built as the staff examines what they expect as a customer and the impact that has on how they go about delivering exceptional service.

### **Greeting All Callers**

The significance of word choice when answering a call is examined as well as the three key parts to an effective greeting.

### **Managing the Flow of Each Call**

Staff learns methods to control each call and how to adjust these methods depending on verbal cues they receive.

### **Vocabulary Choices**

This section teaches word-choice skills that build rapport, keep calls on track and gather necessary information. One of several easily remembered techniques, wordsmithing, details the lessons of choosing the right word or phrase to send the best possible message.

### **Maximizing Voice Tone**

How you say what you say changes your message. Voice tone potential and techniques to use your voice correctly are examined and demonstrated.

### **Etiquette Essentials**

Phone etiquette looks beyond the use of words to discover the possible messages we send when we are, for example, silently looking up something on the computer. What message does this silence send to the customer? This section explores the hidden influences that affect a customer's satisfaction.

## **Survival Skills**

This section provides "must-have" information to disarm an irate caller and to keep your staff's sanity in check.

## **Wrapping Up the Call**

What happens last on the call can often be the easiest for your customer to remember. This part of training shows how to leave your customer satisfied and smiling.