

In carrying out its mission, USTDA relies upon the technical expertise of small consulting and engineering firms to perform definitional missions (DM) and desk studies (DS), which are activities that help define projects, provide sector specific guidance, complete necessary due diligence, and conduct technical and economic evaluations for every project USTDA considers for funding. In fact, all DM and DS contracts are reserved for small businesses. Definitional mission and desk study activities are USTDA contracts that require a technical expert to evaluate a potential USTDA project either in the host country or from their offices here in the U.S. to help USTDA make more technically informed decisions on the viability of a project. These activities generally range from \$1,000 to \$100,000, and are reserved for small businesses as defined by SBA.

FAQs

What is a Definitional Mission?

A Definitional Mission (DM) is intended to help USTDA to find, examine, and develop potential projects in a host country (or countries). These contracts, reserved exclusively for US small businesses, typically range from \$40,000-\$75,000 and involve a visit to one or more countries to develop potential projects for USTDA funding. DMs are performed by technical experts in the areas where USTDA works, and provide guidance to USTDA staff in selecting projects for funding. DMs will define the technical, economic, potential U.S. exports, environmental, financial, and other factors that must be addressed before an investment decision can be made.

A DM report gives background on the country (or countries) visited, the sector studied and the projects recommended. Included in each report are Terms of Reference (TOR) and commensurate budgets, for activities such as Feasibility Studies (FS) or Technical Assistance (TA) that meet USTDA's funding criteria.

What is a Desk Study?

A desk study (DS) is a discrete analysis of a well-defined project proposal (see USTDA Model Proposal Format at <http://www.ustda.gov/program/modelproposalformats.asp>). A DS reviews and evaluates all aspects of a project proposal, including the Terms of Reference and budget, and recommends whether USTDA should provide funding for the project. DSs typically range from \$2,000 to \$8,000, do not involve travel, and are carried out exclusively by small U.S. businesses. DSs under \$3,000.00 are sole-sourced and those over \$3,000.00 are competed from the USTDA Consultant Database. Interested vendors should enter and populate the USTDA Consultant Database (<https://www.ustda.gov/consultantdb/>).

What role do DSs and DMs play for USTDA?

DMs and DSs provide extremely valuable independent expert analysis of project proposals. USTDA receives and explores an enormous number of project proposals every year, in a wide range of sectors, and relies on the technical and regional experience and capabilities of its DM and DS contractors to ensure that potentially viable project proposals receive thorough evaluation before USTDA makes a funding determination. DMs in particular also reach out to potential U.S. companies that could benefit from the proposed projects that USTDA is considering, bringing the projects to the companies' attention and gauging their potential interest.

What kind of projects does a DM Contractor look for on behalf of USTDA?

USTDA works in a wide range of sectors, including transportation, energy, water and environment, and information and communications technology. DM contractors explore proposed project ideas to see if they are consistent with USTDA funding criteria, namely whether their implementation would represent strong opportunities for US firms to participate, their likelihood of obtaining financing, and their potential benefits within the Host Country. Reviewing the Sector Briefs at www.ustda.gov/program/sectors can provide a sampling of the wide variety of activities that DM and DS Contractors evaluate on behalf of USTDA.

What is USTDA looking for in a DM or DS Contractor?

USTDA seeks contractors with substantial experience in the sector and country identified in the DM or DS solicitation. We are looking for technical, commercial, financial and country expertise that will allow the contractor to provide high quality analysis of potential projects and to develop realistic and effective terms of reference and budgets for such projects. The potential contractor should have some knowledge of the relevant financing mechanisms for large scale infrastructure projects including but not limited to: the World Bank, Export-Import Bank, OPIC and the relevant regional development banks. We also seek familiarity with US industry capabilities in the sector in question as the contractor will need to be able to provide analysis on the potential opportunities for US-sourced goods, services and technology in eventual project implementation. As such, the potential contractor should have a good deal of relevant contacts with US companies in the relevant sector. Importantly, we are looking for contractors who can assemble a great deal of information in a concise and clear manner, bearing in mind the explicit goals of the agency. Relevant foreign language skills are helpful but most times not necessary.

What does a DM or DS report consist of and can I see examples?

A Definitional Mission or Desk Study report consists of a review of one or more project proposals in foreign countries for which USTDA may provide grants for feasibility studies, technical assistance or other assistance.

Desk Study reports are typically 15-25 pages long and include a brief description of the project and proposed assistance, the opinion of the consultant regarding the project's likely viability (from at least a technical, economic and financial perspective), an

independent assessment of the U.S. export potential of the project if it were to be implemented, a review of the likelihood of the project obtaining implementation financing, reviews of other issues including the likelihood of negative impacts on the environment or U.S. workers, and finally an overall recommendation to USTDA regarding whether to fund the proposed assistance. The Desk Study report includes a review of the proposed Terms of Reference and budget for the feasibility study or other assistance. If necessary, the report will include a revised Terms of Reference and budget. The Desk Study report includes contact points made during the course of the desk study.

Definitional Mission reports typically contain the same elements as a Desk Study report, but for multiple projects rather than just one. Additionally, Definitional Mission contractors typically must, in cooperation with the host country project sponsor, generate the required terms of reference and budget for the projects under review and these will be included in the report. The reports may include short descriptions of projects not recommended for funding and typically a brief overview of the industry sector in the country or countries that are the subject of the Definitional Mission. Depending on the number of countries and the number of projects, Definitional Mission reports can vary from 40 to in excess of 100 pages. A description of the sections of the Definitional Mission reports can typically be found in the Request for Quote documents at www.fbo.gov where USTDA advertizes its Definitional Mission opportunities.

Because Desk Study reports typically review business confidential proposals made to USTDA, most are not publicly available. Definitional Mission reports, however, are typically publicly available and can be obtained by contacting USTDA's library at our main number.

How can I become a DS or DM Contractor for USTDA?

- **To become a Definitional Mission (DM) contractor:** Competitions for the Definitional Mission contracts are announced and posted online at Federal Business Opportunities at www.fedbizopps.gov. All potential contractors are encouraged to apply and submit a quote by following the instructions listed in the solicitation on fedbizopps.
- **To become a Desk Study Contractor:** Contracting opportunities under \$25,000 with USTDA are not listed on Federal Business Opportunities. To be considered for a Desk Study contract, please email contract@ustda.gov with your contact information and your area of expertise. When Desk Study opportunities arise, the Contracts department will contact you directly to submit a quote for the contract.

For both types of contracts, DM and DS, potential contractors must obtain a DUNS number and register with CCH in order to enter into a contract with USTDA. In order to do business with the government, the contractor must be registered in the Central Contractor Register www.ccr.gov. The website includes information for contractors on how to obtain a DUNS and TIN number.

Additional tips on how to pursue DM work with USTDA can be found at:

<http://www.ustda.gov/businessopps/smbusinesses.asp>

What are the potential benefits for me and my company of working with USTDA as a DM or DS Contractor?

- Added experience working overseas. These activities represent an opportunity to expand your project portfolio.
- Host country project sponsors with which USTDA works are typically government ministries or significant private sector entities, so you will have the opportunity to work with substantial entities.
- USTDA activities are of interest to a wide range of US companies, so you will be contacting many US firms who are active overseas during the contract, further expanding your network and exposing these companies to your company and your expertise.
- DM/DS work can be a stepping stone to moving on to larger projects, either as a subcontractor or as a prime contractor. Many experienced USTDA DM/DS contractors eventually take on USTDA feasibility studies or technical assistance projects. Note, however, that DM/DS contractors are ineligible to work on projects that they have evaluated as part of a DM or DS contract.

What are some ideas for how to obtain additional work with USTDA?

- Team with USTDA Indefinite Quantity Contractors (IQC) as a technical expert for Orientation Visits (OV) or conferences. A list of USTDA IQC contractors can be obtained from USTDA's Contracts Office. You can also review the project lists at the back of USTDA Annual Reports (available on our website), which list USTDA activities (including OVs and conferences) and the USTDA IQC contractors who conducted them. Reviewing these lists will give you an idea of the IQC contractors who have pursued and won contracts to conduct OVs and contracts in your area of expertise. You can contact IQC contractors to let them know of your expertise and interest in teaming with them on upcoming activities.
- Team with consulting engineering firms and other companies that take on USTDA FSs and TAs. Again, reviewing USTDA Annual Reports will show you what companies have pursued activities in your area of expertise, and you may want to contact them to offer your services on future quotes. Please note that DM/DS contractors are prohibited from working on projects resulting from the DM/DS on which they work, but there is no bar to pursuing any other FSs and TAs. FS and TA announcements are posted on www.fbo.gov.

How often does USTDA put out solicitations for DS/DM Contractors?

USTDA funds a total of roughly 100 DMs and DSs each year. In Fiscal Year 2008 USTDA funded 110 and in Fiscal Year 2007 98.

**How long does the process take from solicitation to completion of the contract?
What are the steps?**

The time frame varies, but DMs typically take 3-5 months to completion and DSs take 6-10 weeks to complete.

- Definitional Mission:

- **Solicitation (2 weeks):** Solicitation is posted on USTDA's website (www.ustda.gov) under "Opportunities with USTDA" as well as Federal Business Opportunities (www.fbo.gov) under "USTDA".
- **Contractor Selection (1-3 weeks):** Proposals are received and reviewed by USTDA and USTDA's Contract's Office contacts offerors regarding the selection decision. Duration of review and award can vary depending on the number of proposals received.
- **Contract Performance (2-4 months):** The USTDA Regional Team and DM Contractor proceed with the activity per the contract scope of work, which typically includes a kick-off meeting, submission of pre-visit report, travel to requisite country(ies), draft final report preparation, report revisions, and final report submission to USTDA. Contract performance duration can vary depending on duration of travel, complexity of DM scope, quality of proposals being reviewed, responsiveness of stakeholders, and any other demands specific to the DM.

- Desk Study:

- **Solicitation (1 week):** USTDA requests quotes from qualified Contractors listed in USTDA's database. Companies may register for this database at www.ustda.gov. DS opportunities are intended to offer small businesses an opportunity to work with the U.S. federal government.
- **Contractor Selection (2-5 days):** USTDA will review and select a qualified contractor and offerors are contacted by USTDA's Contract's Office regarding selection decision.
- **Contract Performance (3-12 weeks):** The USTDA Regional Team and DS Contractor proceed with the activity per the contract scope of work, which typically includes reviewing a proposal, contacting the foreign project sponsor and U.S. sole-source contractor (if there is one), contacting other project stakeholders, drafting a final report, revising report, and submitting final report to USTDA. The conduct of this work can vary depending on the complexity of the project being reviewed and responsiveness of parties involved.

How and when is a DS or DM Contactor paid?

USTDA pays invoices submitted by DS and DM Contractors through electronic funds transfer. DS Contractors are paid 100% of the contract amount once USTDA has received and accepted the final report. DM Contractors are paid 30% of the total contract amount upon submittal and acceptance by USTDA of the planned travel itinerary, purchase of airline tickets, and proof of both Defense Base Act insurance and Medical Evaluation insurance. DM Contractors are paid the balance of 70% once USTDA has received and accepted the final report.