USDA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)
PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR USE OF E-BUY

GENERAL:

The General Services Administration's (GSA's) E-Buy is an on-line procurement tool designed to allow buyers to issue requests for quotations (RFQs) for products and services offered on GSA multiple award schedules (MASs). E-Buy is designed to be complementary to GSA *Advantage!*®, and is available for use by Federal Buyers at no cost. Use of E-Buy by USDA acquisition personnel is optional. However, to minimize potential issues related to funds obligation, contract action reporting and record keeping, the following procedures will apply when USDA personnel elect to use E-Buy.

E-BUY FEATURES:

- E-Buy is available at http://www.ebuy.gsa.gov.

- On-line tutorials and guides for use of E-Buy are available at that site once a buyer logs in to E-Buy.

- E-Buy is a tool for issuing RFQs to GSA MAS contractors.

- E-Buy is restricted to only contractors that have GSA MAS contracts.

- GSA is marketing E-Buy primarily as a tool for purchasing services, big-ticket items, complex requirements and products in large quantities.

- A GSA *Advantage!*® User ID and Password are required to use E-Buy. A link to request a User ID and password is available at the E-Buy Buyer Login page.

- E-Buy can be used to create an RFQ, solicit from one (1) to all schedule contractors for a particular Schedule and Special Item Number (SIN), receive schedule contractor quotes, and send email notices to the selected awardee and non-selected contractors. These email notices do NOT obligate funds.

- Although the buyer can select which schedule contractors receive email notices about a particular RFQ, *all RFQs are posted to a general bulletin board in E-Buy and are available to be viewed only by those GSA schedule contractors who have been awarded a MAS contract for the SIN(s) referenced in the RFQ.* This allows contractors that did not receive an email notice about a particular RFQ under their SIN, to view the RFQ and submit a quote. This

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feature in E-Buy makes the solicitation process under the GSA schedules a more transparent process.

- E-Buy requires that RFQs be open for a minimum of 48 hours.

- There is a feature in E-Buy that will permit creation of an order in E-Buy, but *the payment must be made by Government purchase card (credit card)*. Within USDA, this order generation feature is NOT authorized for use by offices that have transitioned to the USDA Integrated Acquisition System (IAS). Use of the order generation feature is limited to offices that are using USDA legacy systems such as PRCH.

- E-Buy generates a history file that has no expiration period, and is associated with the buyer's User ID and password.

- General steps in E-Buy –

  o Log in to E-Buy
  o Find the applicable SIN for the requirement (using the keyword search capability in E-Buy)
  o Select the contractors under that SIN to whom an invitation to quote will be emailed.
  o Create the RFQ in E-Buy (fill in item description, quantity, delivery requirements, etc.)
  o Have E-Buy notify the selected contractors by email and post the RFQ
  o Review and evaluate the quotes received
  o Select the awardee
  o Have email notices sent to the awardee and non-selected contractors (optional) - **The email notice to the awardee is not an order nor does it obligate funds**.
  o If IAS has not been implemented and if the buyer elects to, create the order in E-buy using the Government purchase card for payment.

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USDA PROCUREMENT AND FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

- The Integrated Acquisition System (IAS) is the automated procurement system designated for use USDA-wide (excluding the procurements executed by the Farm Service Agency Kansas City Commodity Office and the Agricultural Marketing Service).

- PRCH is the legacy procurement system being replaced by IAS.

- The Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS) is the USDA financial system in which funds obligations must be recorded.

PROCESS

- For agencies NOT using IAS:

  o E-Buy can be used to generate the RFQ, issue the RFQ, receive quotes, and email notices to contractors when the award determination is made.

  o The E-buy order generation feature may be used only in the instances where payment will be by Government Purchase Card and no order will be generated in a USDA legacy system such as PRCH.

  o If payment will NOT be by Government Purchase Card, the order itself will be created in the USDA legacy system, such as PRCH.

  o Note: When the Government Purchase Card is used for payment purposes the funds obligations are recorded through the Purchase Card Management System (PCMS). Those obligations are then recorded in the FFIS through an interface between PCMS and FFIS. Procurement personnel are reminded to ensure that duplicate obligations are not created when generating procurement documents for contractual actions (see FAR 13.301(c)(3) for which payment will be by Government Purchase Card.

  o The requirements for reporting into the Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation (FPDS-NG) remain unchanged. Orders will be reported in accordance with the procedures in effect at the time the order is issued (i.e., direct key entry, summary reporting through PRCH, etc.).

  o When an order is generated in E-Buy, the system will automatically generate an order number. To enable correct reporting in FPDS-NG, the buyer must change the order number to include as the first 6 digits, AG-XXXX (the 4-digit contracting office code), up to a maximum of 13 digits (including the AG-XXXX).

  o For documentation purposes:

    ▪ The order file should contain, at a minimum, a record that E-Buy was used, the RFQ number and a summary of the quotes received. Information from E-Buy can be cut and pasted into another document to create this summary information. A notation of the availability of the details in E-Buy should be included in the order file, or

    ▪ Buyers may elect to print paper copies of the RFQ and quotes received. RFQs and vendor responses can be printed using the browser's print function. Attachments can be opened in the appropriate application and printed. If the schedule contractors' quotes were submitted as attachments to their quotes, those

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attachments can be downloaded. However, the RFQ and electronic quotes (not submitted as attachments) cannot, at this time be downloaded.

- ▪ If an order is created in E-buy a copy of the order is to be included in the order file.

- • For agencies using IAS:

  o E-Buy can be used to generate the RFQ, issue the RFQ, receive quotes, and email notices to contractors when the award determination is made.

  o The order generation feature in E-Buy is NOT AUTHORIZED for use by agencies/offices using IAS.

  o When E-buy is used to generate the RFQ, after the buyer receives the funded requisition in IAS, the buyer will go to E-Buy, create the RFQ and complete the solicitation process. When the awardee is selected, the buyer will enter the award information (including the line items from the RFQ) into IAS to generate the order and obligation. Information from E-Buy can be cut and pasted into IAS. Although data from E-Buy cannot be exported, agencies may copy descriptions and attach any documents that are compatible (IAS allows most types of documents as attachments).

  o Since IAS also creates RFQs, buyers may elect to generate the RFQ in IAS and still use E-Buy to solicit quotes.

  In this instance, after the buyer receives the funded requisition and creates an RFQ in IAS, the buyer will go to E-Buy and generate an RFQ, but in the item description block state "See Attached," and attach the IAS generated RFQ.

  Use of IAS to generate an RFQ may, in certain circumstances, be preferable as the line items will already have been generated in the RFQ and would not need to be re-entered (except for pricing information) in IAS for the purpose of generating the order and obligation.

  o The requirements for reporting into the Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation (FPDS-NG) remain unchanged. Orders will be reported in accordance with the procedures in effect at the time the order is issued (i.e., direct key entry at this time; through the interface between IAS and FPDS-NG after IAS version 2.2 is implemented).

  o For documentation purposes:

- The order file should contain, at a minimum, a record that E-Buy was used, the RFQ number and a summary of the quotes received. Information from E-Buy can be cut and pasted into another document to create this summary information. A notation of the availability of the details in E-Buy should be included in the order file; or

- Buyers may elect to print paper copies of the RFQ and quotes received. RFQs and vendor responses can be printed using the browser's print function. Attachments can be opened in the appropriate application and printed. If the schedule contractors' quotes were submitted as attachments to their quotes, those attachments can be downloaded. However, the RFQ and electronic quotes (not submitted as attachments) cannot, at this time be downloaded.

Note: Although orders placed against GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contracts are generally delivery or task orders, the term purchase order is used in some of the E-Buy information. Therefore, the term "order" is used in this document to refer to purchase, delivery and task orders.