

Vendor Questions and Responses (Questions 1 through 39)

1. QUESTION: May I still bid on the work if I'm not a SDVOSB? Currently working on getting my VOSB thru VETBIZ

1. ANSWER: Please reference Solicitation Section E.5 (e) (11).

This procurement is set aside for Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) participation only. Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) are not eligible.

To further clarify, this means that you must actually be, and represent to the contracting officer, at the time of offer submission that your business concern is a SDVOSB and a small business. At the time of offer submission you must also be verified in the Vet Biz Information Pages database.

2a. QUESTION: “ Is it planned that the work will be performed in your offices at 555 Corporate Circle in Golden? “

2a. ANSWER: Yes. See Section B.6 Performance Work Statement, Paragraph 2. Scope / Description Of Services, subparagraph 2.1.

2b. QUESTION: “. . . . we would like to know if you have a small business liaison in your offices we could meet with?”

2b. ANSWER: We do have a small business liaison, Mr. Robert Howard. You may contact him by phone at 303-273-6223.

Please note that the solicitation does not include site-visits. Per Solicitation section E.1, Notices To Offerors, if you have any questions regarding the solicitation they should be submitted to me via e-mail by the close of business February 5, 2013.

3. QUESTION: Is there currently an incumbent performing the support services outlined in Solicitation# VA791-13-R-0007? If yes, will you please provide the contract name and number?

3. **ANSWER:** The following information is provided:

There is a current contractor for support services contract workers at the VA DALC Veteran Services Division.

A. Contract: VA791-P-0164

B. Contractor: TDB Communications Inc.

C. Current contract type: Labor Hour

- Not to Exceed amount for Period of Performance 10/01/2011 through 3/31/2012:

\$126,257.40

- Not to Exceed amount for Period of Performance 04/01/2012 through 9/30/2012:

\$129,516.60

- Not to Exceed amount for Period of Performance 10/01/2012 through 03/31/2013:

\$126,859.80

4a. **QUESTION:** “First, is there an incumbent who has been performing this work?”

4a. **ANSWER:** (See answer to Question 3 above)

4b. **QUESTION:** “Second, as a new SDVOSB owner, who has not yet been awarded any govt contracts, how will my lack of past performance be evaluated? Is it possible to submit my performance as a senior level acquisition program manager in the (redacted to prevent vendor identity) for favorable consideration?”

4b i. **ANSWER:** Please See Solicitation Section E.17 52.212-2 EVALUATION –COMMERCIAL ITEMS (JAN 1999) at subsection (e) (2)(iii). Also note that Section E.17 is not limited to Past Performance under only Government contracts.

4b ii. **ANSWER:** Please note that we cannot instruct you not to submit information. Also note that we cannot pre-evaluate information. Please

See Solicitation Section E.17 (c) (2). It is the offeror's reputation for Past Performance that is being referred to in this section. That is to say it is the SDVOSB offeror entity that is being described by that section.

5. QUESTION: Can you tell me the current contractor and the current contract price for this requirement?

5. ANSWER: (See answer to Question 3 above)

6. QUESTION: Reference E.18, 52.212-3: The section references annual representations and certifications completed electronically at the ORCA website. It is my understanding that SAM replaced ORCA.

QUESTION 6a. Please confirm that representations and certifications should be completed electronically in SAM rather than ORCA.

QUESTION 6b. Please confirm that if the Offeror has complete representations and certifications electronically in SAM that representations and certifications do NOT need to be submitted with the proposal.

6a and 6b ANSWER: The solicitation at Section E.5 indicates that the Business Section of offerors proposal shall contain information that includes among other items listed the offeror's completed Representations and Certifications that appear in Section E.18 . The Reps and Certs may be accomplished by hard copy submitted with the offer OR in SAM with submission of information in the Business proposal indicating that it has been accomplished in SAM. Even if the offeror elects to submit the Reps and Certs at E.18 in hard copy they MUST also be registered in SAM.

7. QUESTION: Please confirm that it is not necessary for the Offeror to list the 518210 NAICS in SAM and/or VIP in order to eligible to be awarded this contract.

7. ANSWER Offerors are not required to have the specific NAICS code 518210 that is listed in the solicitation in their (offeror's) SAM and/or VIP, however, they are required to meet the small business Size Standard (See SF 1449 block 10) applicable to the NAICS code referenced in the solicitation. The small business Size Standard in block 10 applies to the entire solicitation to include the reps and certs located at E.17.

8. QUESTION: Are the services to be awarded under this contract currently being performed by Federal employees, or are they being provided under an existing contract? If these services are currently being provided by a contractor, what is the name of the contractor?

8. ANSWER: See answer # 3 above.

9. QUESTIONS: "Reference page 29, paragraph 4:

- a. Please confirm the Federal Government perform the security background checks.
- b. Please confirm the Federal Government performs the Special Agreement Check (SAC).
- c. How long should the offeror plan for processing of the Special Agreement Check?
- d. How much will the Contractor be billed for the Special Agreement Check (SAC)?
- e. How much will the Contractor be billed for the Background Investigation?"

9a. ANSWER: The background process is described in The Performance Work Statement Section 4 with the procedures listed in paragraph 4.6. The process involves both contractor personnel and VA personnel such as the VA DALC Contracting Officer Representative to complete, and as noted in paragraph 4.1 will ultimately be completed by the United States Office of Personnel Management.

9b. ANSWER: Contractor personnel undergoing background checks will have their fingerprints taken at a local VA facility located in nearby Lakewood, Colorado. The fingerprint adjudication will be accomplished by a representative of the VA Security Investigation Center or (SIC).

9c. ANSWER: Once the fingerprints are taken, the fingerprint adjudication is on average accomplished between two to four days.

9d. ANSWER: The SAC fingerprinting and adjudication is part of the background process and part of the background cost.

9e. ANSWER: As noted in the solicitation NACI backgrounds are required for all positions listed in the contract. If a background is accomplished, the current FY 2013 cost for a NACI background is approximately \$279.00. Note that the preceding sentence began with the word "if" not to indicate that backgrounds are in any way optional because they are in fact mandatory. As noted in the solicitation FAR clause

52.222-17 - Nondisplacement of Qualified Workers (Jan 2013) applies. We are informed by the SIC regardless of who is ultimately awarded a new contract, if a contractor worker who is currently working on the present contract continues to work on the new contract there is no requirement for a new background. However, the SIC further indicated that if there is a change in contractors and the new contractor hires the in place contract workers there still are two possible processes that will be required such as obtaining a Certificate Of Investigation (COI) and or a Reciprocation with a fee of between \$10 to \$25. We are further informed that the COI and reciprocation processes take up to two weeks to accomplish. We are also informed by the SIC that NACI backgrounds are valid for up to five years (depending on continuity of working). There are currently four contract workers in these sections with completed NACIs.

10. QUESTION: Documentation of the Company Experience Information is limited to five (5) pages. Is there a total page limit for Section II - Technical/Minimum Requirements?

10. ANSWER: There is no total page limit listed in the solicitation for Section II.

11. QUESTION: Which wage rates are applicable to this contract? For the non-supervisory worker, should we use:

non-supervisory worker, should we use:

- 01051 - Data Entry Operator I?
- 01052 – Data Entry Operator II?
- 01191 – Order Clerk I?
- 01192 – Order Clerk II?
- 12160 – Medical Record Clerk?
- 99050 – Desk Clerk?

11. ANSWER: The Offeror should choose the Occupational Code, Title, and Rate that will meet the requirements of the PWS. It is the Offeror's business decision.

12. QUESTION: Which wage rate should we use for the supervisory worker?

12. ANSWER: The Offeror should choose the Occupational Code, Title, and Rate that will the requirements of the PWS. It is the Offeror's business decision.

13. QUESTION: How extensive is a record, how long does it take?

13. ANSWER: The record that workers access has a great deal of information; however, the portion needed to fulfill the contract requirements (place a commodity order or look up an open work order status) is very limited and takes very little time (approx less than one minute).

14. QUESTION: Please provide the work requirements/process associated with each record entry.

14. ANSWER: A typical, trained worker will process approx 1-2 orders per minute, which includes reading the information from a card, locating the electronic record, verifying and/or updating the address and authorization, placing the order, and shifting to the next card.

15. QUESTION: Please confirm that the workers will be using Government supplied computers, and software.

15. ANSWER: Correct. See Section B.6 Performance Work Statement, Section 3, Government Furnished Property.

16. QUESTION: Please confirm that the workers will be logging in to the Government computer information system.

16. ANSWER: Correct. See Section B.6 Performance Work Statement.

17. QUESTION: Please confirm that the Government is responsible for maintaining the Government computer information system.

17. ANSWER: Correct. See Section B.6 Performance Work Statement.

18. QUESTION: Please confirm that the contractor will not be penalized for reduced contract performance metrics that are a result of slow down or shut down of the Government computer information system, or malfunctioning of the workers' computer terminals, or other such issues beyond the contractor's control.

18. ANSWER: Correct, however note that in any event performance deductions are not penalties.

19. QUESTION: What is the nature of the background check, criminal, credit?

19. ANSWER: It is the standard NACI background.

20. QUESTION: How long does the Special Agreement Check (SAC) background investigation take?

20. ANSWER: See response to question 9 above.

21. QUESTION: How do the contract workers fit into the VA organization:

- a. Who from the VA monitors the contract workers?
- b. Who from the VA do the contract workers report to?

21. ANSWER: 21 a. and b. Note that the Vendor's question asks who from the VA monitors the contract workers and who in the VA do the contract workers report to. As noted below contract workers report to and are supervised by the contract supervisory worker. There will be a VA COR who will monitor the contract and not contract workers (Solicitation Section E.15).

i. See Solicitation Section B.6 PWS, paragraph 2. SCOPE /DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES, subparagraph 2.4.1.

" 2.4.1. Supervision, Management and Administration. The contractor shall provide an onsite contract supervisory worker. The Contract Supervisory Worker shall have full authority to act for the contractor on all matters relating to the daily operation of this contract. The Contract Supervisory Worker shall have full authority over contract personnel and ensure all PWS requirements and work is accomplished in accordance with the PWS. The Contract Supervisory Worker shall have absolutely no authority over Federal employees and shall not provide any supervision of Federal employees."

22. QUESTION: Is there a number of hours of required training for annual privacy training that conforms to the requirements of VHA Privacy Training?

22. ANSWER: The DALC is not part of VHA but is under the organization of the VA Office of Acquisition and Logistics. As far as the annual privacy training, the standard TMS course is listed as 1.0 hours.

23. QUESTION: Please provide the requirements of VHA Privacy Training.

23. ANSWER: The DALC is not part of VHA but is under the organization of the VA Office of Acquisition and Logistics. There is an online course required by all employees and contractors. The course is taken by each worker before they are trained on the contract work. It takes about one

hour or less. If a worker is here for an entire year, they will be required to take the updated course at that time.

24. QUESTION: Is there a number of hours of required training for annual security awareness training that conforms to the requirements of Department of Veterans Office of Cyber and Information Security Training? .

24. ANSWER: The annual security awareness course is part of the privacy course, taken once each year. The course title is: *VA Privacy and Information Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior*.

25. QUESTION: Please provide the requirements of Department of Veterans Office of Cyber and Information Security Training.

25. ANSWER: See response to question 23.

26. QUESTION: Please confirm the contractor is not penalized for failure to meet contract performance standards in a given month when the contractor can demonstrate that the cause of not meeting performance standards was the time required to comply with required annual training.

26. ANSWER: The annual required training takes most workers 30-40 minutes. No impact on performance if they can read and listen to the video. In any event performance deductions are not penalties.

27. QUESTIONS:

27a. QUESTION: How are contract performance standards monitored/determined?

27a. **ANSWER:** Standards are based on historical records and the current VA employees performing the same and similar tasks. Production in the customer service section is monitored through the use of standardized reports built into the database system. Production in the NOAH program captures can only be monitored manually by retrieving the data input daily, by employee, in the NOAH database. Information entered by each respective sign-on must be entered into a spread sheet and accumulated for production numbers for any respective period.

27b. QUESTION: Can the number of new data record entries for each month be queried and run as a report from the database?

27b. ANSWER: Yes, in Customer Service. Reports may be run at any time of the day. Daily reports detail production from the beginning of the workday to the time of the request. At 12:00AM (Midnight) each day, the report system resets; however, full individual days, and multiple time frames of production may also be selected. As indicated above, NOAH programming capture production will have to be manually calculated from information retrieved from the proprietary NOAH database.

27c. QUESTION: Will contractor personnel or Government personnel will run this query?

27c. ANSWER: The Contract Supervisory Worker will have access to the report or data at all times. Government may also run the report.

27d. QUESTION: If Government personnel run the query, can contractor personnel also run the query to confirm the performance levels?

27d. ANSWER: Yes.

27e. QUESTION: Is Structured Query Language (SQL) required to perform the query and run the report?

27e. ANSWER: The only times SQL is utilized is when a worker searches for a particular item that is requested on an order. Most items are in small (5-10) groups/categories that will all display on the page after entering the first 1-2 letters.

28. QUESTION: Who from the Government will train the contractor personnel how to use the Government computer information?

28. ANSWER: The appropriate trainer according to expertise. There may be one or more trainers.

29. QUESTION: Please provide requirements of VA policies pertaining to safeguarding VA sensitive data (p. 59)

29. ANSWER: See Solicitation Sections B.4 and B.5

30. QUESTION: Reference p. 42, para. C.13, "The successful bidder must present...evidence of general liability without any exclusion clauses for asbestos that would void the general liability coverage."

- Please explain the nature of worker exposure to asbestos at the work location.

- Is the asbestos friable, and subject to becoming airborne as a fine dust which might be inhaled by the contract workers?

30. ANSWER: To the best of the facility manager's knowledge there is no know asbestos in the building. The building was built in 1996.

31. QUESTION: How long does it take to complete VA Privacy, Cyber Security Awareness, and Rules of Behavior training on the VA Talent Management System?

31. ANSWER: Approximately one (1) hour.

32. QUESTION: Please confirm that the contractor will not be penalized for not meeting contract performance standard if the contractor can demonstrate that the reduced performance is a direct result of a shutdown of the VA facility due to inclement weather, or other reason (p. 19) beyond the contractor's control.

32. ANSWER: See Section B.6 Performance Work Statement, Paragraph 2.3 Hours of Operation. On any Federal holiday, (observed on a weekday), as well as any week day where the VA facility is officially closed due to inclement weather, or other reason, the Contractor will not be paid for those days. Performance deductions are not penalties. In the event of a Federal Holiday (loss of a weekday) or other official closure that reduces the number of available week day - work days for that particular month a pro rata adjustment to the monthly minimum amounts at 2.5.2.1; 2.5.2.3; 2.5.3.1; and 2.5.4.1 will be made.

33. QUESTION: Reference p. 24, para. 2.5.6: Please confirm that is NOT the Government's intent that all four contractor workers are expected to be present and performing their duties between 6:00am - 6:00pm (12-hour shifts). Please confirm that it is the Government's intent that the workers perform 8-hour shifts, and are scheduled in a manner that there is coverage during the entire daily service period (6:00am – 6:00pm).

33. ANSWER: Correct, 12-hour shifts are not intended. The Section hours of operation are 6:00AM to 6:00PM, Monday through Friday with the exception of Federal holidays. The Section requires staffing throughout the 12-hour day. The contractor will schedule for that coverage.

34. QUESTION: Reference p. 23, para. 2.5.2.1: How long does it reasonably take to perform each of the required 8,000 manual and electronic commodity orders? How is the contractor to know that this standard is reasonably achievable?

34. ANSWER: The 8,000-order requirement is based on the minimum standard required by the current, lowest-graded VA employee. Each individual order is different, although most are very simple and quick. The current highest performers average more than 100 orders processed per hour.

35. QUESTION: Reference p. 23, para. 2.5.3.1: How long does it reasonably take to perform each of the required 4,500 data captures? How is the contractor to know that this standard is reasonably achievable?

35. ANSWER: The 4,500-capture requirement is based on the minimum standard required by the current, lowest-graded Federal VA Hearing Aid Repair Lab employee. Each hearing aid is different, although similar. The current highest performers average almost twice the standard.

36. QUESTION: Reference p. 24, para. 2.5.4.2: How is the contractor to know that is reasonable to expect NOAH software to capture programming information on greater than 80% of attempted captures?

36. ANSWER: See Amendment A00004 this language has been deleted.

37. QUESTION: Reference p. 20, para. 2.4.1, “The Contract Supervisory Worker shall have full authority to act for the contractor on all matters relating to the daily operation of this contract.” Since the contractor’s on-site supervisory worker performs supervisory and management functions part of the time, will the supervisor also be required to meet the individual performance standards (e.g. 8,000 orders per month per contract worker)?

37. ANSWER: Yes.

38. QUESTION: Reference p. 23-27, CCS and LAB performance Requirements: Assuming 8-hours per day, and 4 weeks per month (approximately correct when holidays are taken into consideration), 8,000 entries per month per worker translates to one entry every 1.2 minutes. The work processes are not well enough described for the contractor to understand whether the performance standards are realistic, achievable, and reasonable. The risks for the contractor are enormous should the performance standards prove to be unachievable. The contractor would be locked into a money-losing

contract for as many as five years. Given the lack of clarity regarding the reasonableness of the performance standards, the contractor cannot provide a price that accurately reflects the performance standards.

38 a. QUESTION: Please consider providing contractors the opportunity to visit the site, view the specific work being performed by the current team, and ask questions of the current team.

38a. ANSWER: There will not be a site visit. A question period was listed in the solicitation.

38 b. QUESTION: Please provide screen printouts of the information to be input into the database, or other equivalent information which clearly indicates the data entry requirements to meet each of the performance requirements:

38 b i. --- 8,000 manual and electronic commodity orders

38 b i. ANSWER: See attached Sample Commodity Order Sequence

38 b ii. ---- 5,900 commodity orders received by phone in conjunction with manual and electronic commodity orders

38 b ii. ANSWER: See attached Sample Commodity Order Sequence

38 b iii. ---4,500 captures (hearing aid data information)

38 b iii. ANSWER: See attached NOAH Hearing Aid Program Capture Procedures

38 c QUESTION: The VA is apparently able to track the performance metrics (reference p. 20, para. 2.4.1.2, and p. 29, para. 3.2.5). Please provide performance history for the team who are currently performing the work:

38 c i. 8,000 manual and electronic commodity orders

38 c i. ANSWER: See attached - Historical Processing Information

38 c ii. 5,900 commodity orders received by phone in conjunction with manual and electronic commodity orders

38 c ii. ANSWER: See attached - Historical Processing Information

38 b iii. 4,500 captures (hearing aid data information)

38 c iii. ANSWER: See attached - Historical Processing Information

38 d QUESTION: Reference p. 23, para. 2.5.2.3: Regarding the commodity orders received by phone in conjunction with manual and electronic commodity orders: Telephonic order taking from veteran/customers requires and the CCS worker to engage in a verbal exchange with our veteran/customers. Verbal exchanges with customers are inherently inefficient, and can take a very long time per transaction. The customer does know what information the CSS worker requires to fulfill the order, and may have to look for the required information such as hearing aid manufacturer and model. Furthermore, the customer may be in no hurry at all, may want to engage the CCS worker in small talk, and has no idea that the CSS worker may be under enormous time constraint pressure to meet the performance requirement. At the same time the CCS worker must take pains to be friendly and courteous and generate no customer complaints (Reference p. 24, para. 2.5.5).

38 d i. Are the telephonic orders taken from live conversations with veteran/customers?

38 d i. ANSWER: Yes – A telephonic order is filled using the same procedure as detailed on attached Sample CommodityOrder Sequence

38 d ii. If the telephonic orders are not taken from live conversations with veteran/customers, how are they taken?

38 d ii. ANSWER: N/A

38 d iii. Please provide information indicating that the performance requirement of 5900 commodity orders received by phone and in conjunction with manual and electronic commodity orders is achievable and reasonable.

38 d iii. ANSWER: The average number of commodity orders processed by all employees—which includes the highest performers through the lowest performers—is currently 6,682 orders per month, without overtime. The calculation is based on the time period 1-Oct-12 through 31-Jan-13, and includes only individuals who processed orders from all three sources: live telephone calls, e-mail messages, and blue cards. The top performers average more than 7,500 orders per month.

39 QUESTION: Please confirm the contractor will not be penalized for failure to meet the performance requirements due to workers' absence for vacation. Please confirm that the performance requirements will be reduced

proportionately to the time a worker is absent while taking paid vacation. Otherwise, please clarify how workers' absence for paid vacation will be handled so as not to penalize the contractor.

39. ANSWER: Performance deductions are not penalties. When a Contractor Employee is on vacation; however, the Contractor will not be paid for hours not worked.