

**Question and Answers to Solicitation FNS-04-107LLH
Food Stamp Program Store Visit Contract.**

1. Question: Is there a government dollar estimate for the Western region annual visits?

Answer: Yes there is a government dollar estimate, however the Governments estimate of cost is not releasable.

2. Question: My Company is 8a and HUBZone certified. We are going to joint venture with our SBA approved Mentor (a large business concern), will the JV have small business consideration and will we receive any additional preference – we will be bidding the western region.

Answer: The Small Disadvantaged Business Price Preference Evaluation Credit and the Hubzone Business Price Preference Evaluation Credit are applicable only for the Full and Open Competitive procurement in the Mountain Plain region.

For purposes of a JV and small business size standards; it is determined by the revenues from all sources or the employees of both firms added together to determine the size of the JV. See Section L-11 for size standard of this solicitation.

3. Question: For the South East Region Area that is the HUBZone set aside, if the offeror is a small business are a Small Business Subcontracting Plan and a Small Disadvantage Business Participation Targets Plan required with its offer.

Answer: A Small Business Subcontracting Plan and Small Disadvantage Business Participation Target Plan are required only for the Full and Open Competitive procurement in the Mountain Plain region.

4. Question: The Southeast Region is a HUBZone set-aside. Does the HUBZone business have to be located within the Southeast Region?

Answer: No

5. Question: Is the HUBZone set-aside tiered up to 8(a), SDB or small business if no acceptable bid is received from a HUBZone business.

**Question and Answers to Solicitation FNS-04-107LLH Page 2 Food Stamp
Program Store Visit Contract.**

Answer: If the contracting officer receives no acceptable offers from HUBZone small business concerns, the HUBZone set-aside shall be withdrawn and the requirement, if still valid, set aside for small business concerns, as appropriate. FAR 19.1305.

6. Question: The synopsis includes the states of North Dakota, Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming, yet when I look at the regions those states are not listed. Is this an error? If so, which region will they be in for this project.

Answer: Yes, this was an error. The states of North Dakota, Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming are not a part of the Food Stamp Store Visit Contract.

7. Question: The Annual Total Projection for the Mountain Plains Region includes a Part A, new Auth Visit and a Part B Reauth Visit projection. are there similar projection for the other regions I.e. MARO, MPRO, NERO, etc. ?

Answer: The Annual Total Projection for the other regions have been added in Amendment 1 now posted on the FNS Web site.

8. Question: Is the current contracts for the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast region eligible to compete.

Answer: Yes. They are both Set Aside for Small Business

9. Question: What is the amount of the current contract for the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast Midwest, Southeast, Mountain Plains, Southwest and Western regions.

Answer: Mid-Atlantic region - \$1,872,673, Northeast region - \$2,650,187, Midwest region -\$2,094,113, Southeast region - \$2,694,356, Mountain plains region - \$1,015,545.63, Southwest region - \$1,792,501, Western region - \$1,406,743.

10. Questions: Who is the incumbent contractor for the western region? There size status. Why the western region was set-aside to small business?

Answers: Greet America, Inc, Small, Women owned. The contracting officer determined that there was a reasonable expectation of obtaining offers from two or more responsible small business concerns that are competitive in terms of market prices, quality, and delivery.

11. Question: Who is the incumbent contractor and address in the Southeast region

Answer: Delta-21 Resources, Inc., #4 Market Square, Suite 301, Knoxville, TN 37902

12. Question: Would it be acceptable to submit our electronic proposal copy on a CD instead of 3.5 in disks.

Answer: Yes, this is acceptable.

13. Question: Attachment G on page 36 of the solicitation (3.5.4) is referenced as the Photographers Certification Statement, but in Section J there is no Attachment G.

Answer: Attachment G should be removed from the solicitation document; there is no such attachment. The Photographer's Certification Statement is a brief statement to verify that pictures were taken by the reviewer and it must be signed by the reviewer.

14. Question: The solicitation references Attachment A, FNS Field Office Directory, but the only thing included was a Supplement to Attachment A which lists Field Offices covered by Region.

Answer: Attachment A, the FNS Field Office Directory, must be mailed to interested Contractors. That directory provides the address and phone numbers for all Field Offices and all Regional Offices, by Region. Attachment B provided visit estimates by States. Not all States will be covered under the contracts; therefore, some States listed in the Field Office Directory will not be included in Attachment B.

15. Question: On page 13 in the 2nd paragraph, should the 4th line be changed to reflect that Field Offices will attempt to group “reauthorization” stores by geographic location?

Answer: Most store visit groupings by geographic locations will involve reauthorization visits. It is more difficult to group new visits this way.

16. Question: On page 13 in the 3rd paragraph, should the 2nd sentence read a maximum of 10 Call Orders per week “can” be placed by a Field Office instead of “will” be placed?

Answer: Yes. The maximum number of Call Orders is 10 per week, but Field Offices can and do order less, depending on the number of visits they need at the time.

17. Question: Will monthly reports be accepted via e-mail instead of in hard copy?

Answer: Yes. FNS expects to receive monthly reports via e-mail and not in hard copy as a matter of routine.

18. Question: On page 14, it is stated that contractors shall accept call orders in Microsoft Word format; however, in what format will call orders be issued to contractors?

Answer: One attachment will be a Word document (.doc) and the other will be the raw data in a text file, formatted in a flat file fixed record length (.txt).

19. Question: On page 14 of the solicitation (3.1.3.) contractors are expected to verify the phone number of the store; however, the form used does not include a space to insert a phone number when there is a new phone number.

Answer: The forms used to collect information may be periodically updated to the satisfaction of both the contractor and FNS. However, the basic information must be collected. Currently many contractors will cross out the old phone number and write a new number in the margins of the form.

20. Question: FAR regulations allow agencies to accept electronic signatures and records in connection with Government contracts. The solicitation requires some documents to be signed by the contractors. Can these be signed electronically?

Answer: Not at this time. Several forms that once required signatures have been revised to eliminate signatures, but some forms still require signatures. This may change during the course of this contract if USDA approves electronic signatures.

21. Question: If a contractor provides a .pdf backup for stores within each call order, by Field Office by the 10th of each month to each Field Office, does this fulfill the

requirement to provide all forms in a .pdf format, or does the electronic web based system also have to provide the forms in a .pdf format?

Answer: Forms completed by reviewers during the store visit must be posted on the website so that signatures required on some documents can be viewed. Typically these completed forms are scanned onto a CD and onto the website where FNS can view them.

22. Question: FNS has made subtle changes to the Survey Form and Checklist in the past. Does FNS foresee making any further changes to either form in the future?

Answer: FNS may make minor changes to the Survey Form and Checklist during the course of this contract if needed, but none are anticipated at this time.

23. Question: The digital image size specification in the solicitation requires 800 x 600 pixels. Would you consider a minimum image size of 640 x 480 pixels?

Answer: USDA went through a considerable period of experimentation before settling on the 800 x 600 pixel requirement. This size offers us the minimum image quality/size that is needed, without being unduly slow. Therefore, USDA will not consider changing the image size at this time.

24. Question: The solicitation allows compliance visits which can be either new or reauthorization visits. For field reviewer safety purposes, will USDA indicate which call order stores are targeted for such visits?

Answer: FNS will only indicate if a visit is a 10-day (new) visit or a 30-day (reauthorization) visit. Compliance visits conducted by contractors will be no different than new or reauthorization visits and will not pose a safety problem. They serve only to up-date information. These visits should not be confused with compliance visits conducted by FNS staff that deal with fraud and abuse issues.

25. Question: In order to help optimize the field collection schedule, is USDA willing to consider increasing the minimum number of stores issued on a call order from (1) to (3) stores?

Answers: No. USDA does not control the number of new stores requesting authorization on any given day and has a limited amount of time to collect all information necessary to determine eligibility.

26. Question: The solicitation indicated that new store call orders will not be issued on Friday. Would USDA consider issuing new store call orders on a routine basis, such as one day a week, for example on Wednesday, in order to optimize the field collection schedule? And, would USDA consider changing the due date for the 10-day new store call order from 10 calendar days to 10 business days?

Answer: USDA has in the past issued call orders for new store visits on Fridays and prior to Federal Holidays. However, when current contractors suggested extending the 10-day period, USDA decided to no longer order new visits on Fridays or on the day before a Federal Holiday. This was done instead of extending the 10-day period by

additional days or by changing from 10 calendar days to 10 business days. There are no plans to change this.

27. Question: Can you tell me the estimated number of visits by city and/or county?

Answer: Store visit estimates are provided by Region and State only.

28. Question: Nevada is not included in Attachment A on the first page, but it is listed on the following page for total numbers by region. Is Nevada included in the contract?

Answer: Yes. Attachment A is a Field Office Directory that includes the address and phone numbers for all Field Offices and each Regional Office. USDA does not have Field Offices in every State; therefore, some Field Offices order visits for multiple States within their Regions. Nevada is included in the contract.

29. Question: Where will the initial training be held once the contract is awarded and will there be training for each State?

Answer: Training is covered under Task 1 in the solicitation. Initial training that all contractors must attend will likely be in either Chicago, Illinois or Washington, DC. Additional training will depend on the status of the contractor as specified in Task 1.

30. Question: Can you identify the metro area where the Regional Offices are located for each State listed in the Solicitation?

Answer: Attachment A, the Field Office Directory, lists the address for each Regional and Field Office and lists each State within that region.

31. Question: 1. Whether price preference / evaluation credit given to SDB or HUBZone certified firms applies to the Mountain Plains Region only (full & open competition) or the Partial Small Business Set-aside Regions such as Western Region as well? It seems it is not 100% clear, depending upon how you read the applicable sections.

Answer: The price preference/evaluation credit only applies to the Mountain Plains Regions that is being solicited as full and open competition.

32. Question: In L-16, Notice of Price Evaluation Adjustment for SDB, it says that SDB will get 5% evaluation adjustment over other offers (except those from SDBs). Now, since Partial Small Business Set-aside Regions will have only small business firms bidding for the job, this means that SDB proposer in Small Business Set-aside regions will get 5% preference over non-SDB small business?

Answer: The 5% evaluation adjustment for SDB only applies to the Mountain Plans Region that is being solicited as full and open competition.

33. Question: In L-17, Notice of Price Evaluation Preference for HUBZone firms, it says that HUBZone certified firms will get 5% price preference over other successful offers (except those from HUBZone firms and from small business firms). Now, since Partial Small Business Set-aside Regions will have only small business firms bidding for the

job, this means that HUBZone firm proposer in these regions will not get any price preference at all against smaller business firms?

Answer: The 5% evaluation adjustment for HubZone only applies to the Mountain Plans Region that is being solicited as Full and Open. Also, as answered below the evaluation adjustment should be 10%.

34. Question: It is strange that SDB will get 5% evaluation adjustment while HUBZone firms will not get 5% preference against the same small business concerns in the Partial Small Business Set-aside regions. Maybe I miss something here? Or all of these apply to only full and open competition contract.

Answer: These only apply to the Mountain Plans Regions which is full and open competition. . Also, as answered below the evaluation adjustment should be 10%.

35. Question : L-17 (B)(2) says HUBZone firms will be given a factor of 10%. Why there is a difference here, when in L-17(B)(1) it says SDB will get 5% evaluation adjustment. Is this a different aspect?

Answer: No, this is a mistake. The SDB will also have a factor of 10%. A modification will correct this.

36. Question: M.2 Evaluation Factor. It says that a proposer that is both SDB and HUBZone will get benefits of both. How does this exactly work? For example, if a small business offers \$100 per unit, SDB or HUBZone offering \$100 per unit will be evaluated as \$95? For both SDB/HUBZone certified firm will be evaluated as offering \$90 per unit, in effect?

Answer: No, please see the section below entitled Price Evaluation Adjustment Clarification

37. Question: HUBZone certification timing: A proposer must be listed as HUBZone firm by the time of submitting proposal? Or can the firm, having applied for HUBZone before the submission date, be evaluated as a HUBZone firm if it can get certification before the award of the contract? SDB certification allows such interim status, but the solicitation does not mention any such interim status for HUBZone.

Answer: An proposer must be certified as a HUBZone prior to submission of their proposal.

38. Question: Is there an example of a store sketch (Ref pg. 37 Task 4.1.C Sketch of Store.

Answer: Yes, see attached Store Sketch Example.

PRICE EVALUATION ADJUSTMENTS CLARIFICATIONS

1. Evaluation Adjustments for Small Disadvantage Business (SDB) Concerns:

For the evaluation price adjustment offerors will be evaluated by adding an evaluation factor of 10% to the price of all offers, except—for

Offers from Small Disadvantage Business Concerns that have not waived the adjustment.

The 10% price factor shall be applied to the Evaluated Total Price (see pg. 102 Business Proposal Instructions).

For example – If a non SDB concern submitted an evaluated Total price of \$100, the 10% price factor would be added to their evaluated price, thus for evaluation purposes only; their proposed price would be \$110.

2. Evaluation Adjustments for HubZone Small Business Concerns (SBC).

For the evaluation price adjustment offerors will be evaluated by adding an evaluation factor of 10% to the price of all offers, except—for

Offers from HubZone Small Business Concerns that have not waived the adjustment.

The 10% factor shall be applied to the Evaluated Total Price (see pg. 102 Business Proposal Instructions).

For example – If a non HubZone Small Business Concern submitted a Evaluated Total price of \$100, the 10% price factor would be added to their evaluated price, thus for evaluation purposes only there price would be \$110.

3. Evaluation Adjustments for offerors that are both Small Disadvantage Business Concerns and HubZone Small Business Concerns.

A concern that is both a SDB and HubZone SBC will receive the benefit of both the HubZone Small Business price evaluation preference (10%) and the Small Disadvantage Business price evaluation preference (10%). Each applicable price evaluation preference or adjustment shall be calculated independently against an offeror's base adjustment. These individual preference amounts shall be added together to arrive at the total evaluated price for that offer.

For example- If a non SDB, non HubZone SBC submitted a evaluated total price of \$100, a factor of 10% would independently be added for both the SDB evaluation factor and the HubZone evaluation factor. Thus the evaluated total price would be \$120.

4. Waiver of the price preference for Hubzone SBC and SDB concerns.

Either price preference may be waived and instead the evaluation factors criterion 4 and/or 5 under Section M.2 EVALUATION FOR AWARD will be used for evaluation.

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