

# Government Contract Assistance Program (GCAP)

PREPARING TO RESPOND TO A SOLICITATION-- TOP 12 TIPS,  
&  
ARE YOU READY TO DO SO?

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# AGENDA

- ▶ Responding To A Solicitation, Top 12 Tips
- ▶ Questions
- ▶ If Time Allows, We Can Discuss
  - ▶ Additional Proposal Tips
  - ▶ Preparing to Contract with Federal, State, and Local Government Agencies
  - ▶ Finding Opportunities

# Responding To A Solicitation:

## Top 12 tips

# TIP No. 1

## Read The Solicitation Completely

All too often contractors don't take time to sufficiently read the solicitation in full and ultimately will miss information regarding submittal process and response expectations.

- ▶ **Get three different highlighter colors;**
  - ▶ with the first color go through and highlight the “**Contractor shall/will**” sections,
  - ▶ with the second color highlight all the “**Government shall**” and make a matrix so that you know exactly what is expected of each party.
  - ▶ With a third color, highlight **the evaluation criteria** and what is **expected** as part of the response

# TIP No. 2

## Know When To Question the Solicitation/Specifications

If you find an unclear or ambiguous specification, raise the question prior to submitting the quote/proposal.

- ▶ Allows Contracting Officer to correct or clarify by amendment if necessary
- ▶ Allows you, as the contractor, to have some input as to what the specifications might be and fully understand what the GOV is requiring.
- ▶ There are usually deadlines for submitting questions to the CO regarding the Solicitation, be aware of what that date is.
- ▶ Faulty or ambiguous specifications will be an issue throughout the life of the contract.

# TIP No. 3

## Do You Need Insurance or Bonds

If you are responding to a Construction Solicitation, you most likely will be required to provide proof of Insurance and Formal Bonds

### ► INSURANCE:

- Read the solicitation carefully to ensure that you understand what type/amount of Insurance it is requesting.

### ► BONDS:

- **Bid Guarantee:** is a form of security assuring that the bidder will not withdraw a bid within the period specified for acceptance and will execute a written contract and furnish required bonds, including any necessary coinsurance or reinsurance agreements, within the time specified in the bid, unless a longer time is allowed, after receipt of the specified forms
- **Payment Bond:** is a surety bond posted by a contractor to guarantee that its subcontractors and material suppliers on the project will be paid. They are required in contracts over \$35,000 (per FAR 28.102-2) with the Federal Government and must be 100% of the contract value. They are often required in conjunction with performance bonds.
- **Performance Bond:** guarantees satisfactory performance of all duties specified in the contract. Examples would be the labor of all sub-contractors, suppliers, and payment of materials. The principal will require the performance bond once awarded the contract.

# TIP No. 4

## Give Yourself Enough Time to Submit Quote/Proposal

Allow sufficient time to respond accurately and appropriately, can't stress this enough.....

- ▶ Incomplete package or incoherent packages may result in degraded ratings or failure to comply
- ▶ Submit your quote/proposal by the date and time indicated on the solicitation
  - ▶ Late proposals are normally not accepted
    - ▶ If there is not a specific time noted, then it is typically due by close of business in that time zone. However, always suggest contacting the CO of record to confirm time due

# TIP No. 5

## Pre Proposal Conferences or Planned Site Visits

Attend pre-proposal conference or planned site visit in order to:

- ▶ Gain better understanding of the government's requirements and clear up any uncertainties or gaps in the SOW or other contractual requirements.
- ▶ To meet the Government individuals attached to the requirement and any potential Prime Contractors.
- ▶ Consider teaming or subcontracting to strengthen position.
- ▶ Determine IF you should propose and how best to satisfy the requirement given the government's "primary desirables" and the offeror's strength relative to other competitors
- ▶ Identify and resolve concerns/questions regarding the acquisition approach

Depending on the Government Agency, they may make the site visit mandatory and if you don't attend, your proposal will not be considered. State requirements often have this in solicitations---



# TIP No. 6

## Do you Understand your Business Capabilities?

Exaggerating competencies can get you in trouble

- ▶ Understanding your strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Are you realistic about your capabilities?
  - ▶ Understand that Agency individuals will check your capabilities through various sources
- ▶ Know your competition
  - ▶ Is there an incumbent contractor?
  - ▶ What are their strengths and weaknesses?

# TIP No. 7

## Have You Done Your Market Research?

- ▶ Do you know which Government Agencies are buying your product or service?
- ▶ Do you know who your competitors are and what their pricing is
- ▶ Do you know who has been winning awards?

**Do you know where and how to go to find all this information?**

FBO

ORPIN

USA Spending

FPDS-NG

GCAP-Bid Match Service

# TIP No. 8

## Remember To Incorporate The Proper Submittals/Documentation

- ▶ Not including the proper documentation or submittals will most likely have the quote/proposal be considered as non-responsive and be rejected
- ▶ Submittals may include but are not limited to;
  - bonds and bid guarantees
  - Specific GSA information
  - Insurance
  - Amendments
  - Design
  - Specific Past Performance forms
  - Safety Plans
  - List of Equipment
  - Resumes
  - Quality Assurance Plans
  - Material Samples

## TIP No. 9

# Cutting And Pasting From One Document to Another Without a Final Edit

It is way too easy to cut and paste information from a previous solicitation response, BUT.....

- ▶ Make sure you edit out information that does not pertain to the current solicitation being submitted
- ▶ Tailor your response to the specific solicitation being bid on
- ▶ ALWAYS review your solicitation response at least twice prior to submitting to ensure that there are no misspelled words, or inappropriate and/or unnecessary information.

# TIP No. 10

## Presuming The Evaluation Committee Will Know What Your Intent Is

- ▶ Don't ever assume or presume that the selection committee knows what your intent is.....Even if you are the current contractor
  - ▶ Government can only evaluate what is in your proposal, very similar to a resume- only what is presented can be evaluated
- ▶ Practice the ABC's of writing;
  - Accuracy- Specific to the requirement
  - Brevity- Not lengthy or wordy
  - Clarity- Be very clear and concise

# TIP No. 11

## Calculate Price Correctly Or Pricing Accurately

- ▶ Incorrect pricing is one of the most common errors
  - ▶ Re-calculate your individual line item prices and your total price
  - ▶ Ensure pricing is structured as requested in the bid schedule
  - ▶ Ensure pricing included all costs, profit, or overhead that you need to consider (travel, per diem, etc.)

## TIP No. 12

### Sign The Quote/Proposal

- ▶ Failure to sign a quote/proposal may result in rejection of your submittal

# In Summary

- ▶ The 12 tips are not all inclusive, just the top most missed issues.
  - ▶ Review the solicitation
  - ▶ Know what to submit and how
  - ▶ Understand your strengths and weaknesses
  - ▶ Give yourself enough time
  - ▶ Ensure your pricing is accurate
  - ▶ SIGN the proposal



# Questions???



# Additional Proposal Tips



Oregon's Procurement  
Technical Assistance Center

# LET'S TAKE A STEP BACK

We have discussed 12 tips for responding to a solicitation,

BUT

ARE YOU READY TO DO SO?

# UNDERSTAND YOUR Go or No-Go Strategy

- ▶ Consider all information collected/considered
  - ▶ Requirement/agency needs & desires
  - ▶ Core competencies
  - ▶ Competition
  - ▶ Win Strategy - what makes you better?
- ▶ Step back: Objectively evaluate
- ▶ Have more than one person in the process (devil's advocate)
- ▶ Balance aggressiveness with realism
  - ▶ Can you really do the job?
  - ▶ Are you competitive?

# Brainstorming your Response

- ▶ Outline your WIN strategy, SOW, Evaluation Factors
- ▶ Use outline from Sections L&M (Instructions and Evaluation Criteria)
  - ▶ Include minimum requirements
  - ▶ Add what sets you apart
- ▶ Address the issues raised within the SOW within the framework of the evaluation criteria

# Understand Structure of Solicitation

- ▶ Contract Line Item (CLIN) Structure/Unit pricing (Section A/B)
  - ▶ Optional CLINS
- ▶ Specifications or Statement of Work (Section C)
- ▶ Delivery/Performance location (Section F)
- ▶ Provisions and Clauses (Sections I and K)
  - ▶ Set-asides (Limitation on Subcontracting) (52.219 clauses)
- ▶ Instructions to Offerors (Section L or 52.212-1)
- ▶ Evaluation Criteria (Section M or 52.212-2)

# ALWAYS READ

## Instructions to Offerors (Section L or 52.212-1)

Tells you what the government wants in the proposal and the format expected

- ▶ Provides details on:
  - ▶ Proposal Due Dates
  - ▶ Site Visit if Planned/Pre-proposal conference
  - ▶ Numbers of copies of Proposal
  - ▶ Submission format (hard copy, electronic, email, etc.)
  - ▶ Technical/past performance information needed for evaluation
- ▶ Theoretically should line up with the evaluation criteria
  - ▶ Beware - even if it doesn't appear it will be evaluated, include anyway as you could get marked down

# HAVE YOUR REVIEWED THE Specifications or Statement of Work

## Most important part of a solicitation

- ▶ Make sure you understand it  
and
- ▶ When developing your proposal ensure you cover all the costs
  - ▶ Make sure you know location of project or location of shipping in order to factor costs appropriately
  - ▶ Include travel costs: fuel, meals, lodging etc. (if needed)
  - ▶ Include Profit, Overhead, General and Administrative



# DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE Evaluation Criteria (Section M or 52.212-2)

- ▶ Should match with Instructions to Offerors
- ▶ Agency wants contractor to clearly address each requirement
  - ▶ Not just say you “will comply” or repeat requirement
  - ▶ Explain in detail “how you will comply”
  - ▶ Agency expects proposals to demonstrate that you know what you are doing and are not just reiterating the requirement back
- ▶ For commercial acquisitions, 52.212-2 may or may not have a detailed addendum

# Understanding Evaluation Approach in Section M

## Best Value

- ▶ Tradeoff between price and performance that provides the greatest overall benefit under the specified selection criteria.
  - ▶ Understand relative importance of price, technical approach and past performance
  - ▶ Helps focus your proposal (low price or performance)

## Low Price Technically Acceptable (LPTA)

- ▶ Process is appropriate when best value is expected to result from selection of the technically acceptable proposal with the lowest evaluated price.

# How to Satisfy the Evaluating Team

- ▶ Does your response easily follow RFP format?
- ▶ Is your response clear, and in concise writing style?
- ▶ Does your response have uncluttered graphics?
- ▶ Does your response easily separate proposal sections for distribution to evaluators:
  - ▶ finance, technical, management?

# Proposal Review

## Need a “second or third set of eyes”

- ▶ An important, but often neglected process
- ▶ Usually overlooked due to time constraints
- ▶ Can annotate questions or flag problem areas (e.g. unclear, garbled, already stated, contradiction)”
- ▶ Pick reviewer(s) who;
  - ▶ Have knowledge of the requirement,
  - ▶ Will give an honest review, and
  - ▶ Not intimately associated with this effort

**GCAP can assist with the review process**

# QUESTIONS



# Preparing to Contract with Federal, State, and Local Government Agencies

# Are You Ready For Government Contracting

Is your business well-established?

- A solid business plan or have been in business for over 2 years
- Know your target market
- Have strong cash flow, line of credit, and/or loan in place (be able to cover expenses for 3-6 months)

Do you have Dun & Bradstreet number (DUNS-Data Universal Numbering System)?

Are you Registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) and Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS)

Is your business qualified for a Set-Aside?

Is your business State or Federally Certified for a Set-aside?

# Are You Aware of State And Federal Certifications

## COBID State Certifications

Emerging Small Business (ESB)

Minority/Women Business Enterprise (MWBE)

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)

<http://www.oregon4biz.com/How-We-Can-Help/OMWESB/>

## Federal Certifications

Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone)

8(a) - Socially and economically disadvantaged

Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) (EDWOSB)

Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)

[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

[www.VetBiz.gov](http://www.VetBiz.gov)





# Are You Aware of What a Small Business Set-Aside is?

An opportunity where the federal government is required to set aside a contract exclusively for small businesses or a sub group of small businesses.

## 23% of all requirements to Small Business Prime Contractors \*

- Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Fed GOV requires 5% annually
- Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB)\*\* Fed GOV requires 5% annually
- Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)\*Fed GOV requires 3% annually
- Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB)
- Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) \*Fed GOV requires 3% annually
- 8(a) Program\*
  - \* Can be set-aside if there are 2 or more capable businesses
  - \*\* Can be set-aside if there are 2 or more capable women-owned businesses in NAICS identified by SBA

# Finding Opportunities



Oregon's Procurement  
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# Sites That Advertise Opportunities

Federal Government Agencies are required to advertise all requirements over \$25,000 electronically in databases such as;

- ▶ Federal Business Opportunities (FBO) [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov)
- ▶ FedConnect [www.fedconnect.net](http://www.fedconnect.net) (DOI Agencies)

## STATE Site:

- ▶ ORPIN <http://orpin.oregon.gov/open.dll/welcome>
- ▶ Local entities such as:
  - ▶ Central Oregon Builders Exchange  
<http://onlineplanservice.com/PublicWorks/OnlinePublicWorksEntities.aspx>
  - ▶ Forest Service - Contracting West  
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/r6/workingtogether/?cid=stelprdb5388369&width=full>
- ▶ GCAP's Bid Matching (GCOM)

# GCAP'S Government Contracting Opportunities Matching (GCOM)

- ▶ Daily Computer matching
- ▶ Scan over 1500 databases locally or nationwide
- ▶ Federal Business Opportunities
- ▶ Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) + 43 additional federal agencies
- ▶ International leads
- ▶ 28 Public Agencies in Oregon
- ▶ Prime Contractor leads
- ▶ Local leads input by GCAP HQ

# GCOM Scans 50+ Procurement Websites In Oregon & similar sites in each state

Central Oregon Builders Exchange

City of Bend

Bend Parks & Recreation

City of Prineville

City of Madras

La Pine Park & Recreation District

Bend 2030

Redmond Area Park and Recreation District

Harney County School District 1J

Central Oregon Community College

City of Sisters

Arnold Irrigation District

Crooked River Ranch Water Company

Deschutes Public Library

City of La Pine

Jefferson County Fire District #1

City of John Day

Lakeview Gardens

Elgin Health District

Central Oregon Community College

City of Baker City, Oregon

City of Grants Pass, Oregon

City of Gresham, Oregon

City of Madras - Oregon

City of Medford, Oregon - Purchasing/RFPs

City of Prineville, Oregon

City of Roseburg, Oregon

City of Sisters, Oregon

County of Clackamas, Oregon

County of Klamath, Oregon

Energy Trust of Oregon, Inc

Home Forward - Portland, Oregon

Jackson County, Oregon

Josephine County, Oregon

Oregon Health & Science University

Oregon State University - Procurement and Contract  
Services (PaCS)

Portland Community College, Oregon

The City of Ashland, Oregon

USDA Forest Service - Western Oregon Contracting Area

Not an all inclusive list