

Sources Sought

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“SOURCES SOUGHT” NOTICES

- Are they important?



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What is it?

- The purpose of a Sources Sought Notice is to determine if there are two (2) or more capable Small Businesses that can perform the requirements of a planned contract.
- For this reason, it is vitally important for Small Businesses to respond to Sources Sought Notices with an effective Capability Statement.



WHAT IS A SOURCES SOUGHT NOTICE?

- Method of “market research”
- Synopsis posted in FEDBIZOPPS
- Invitation for interested parties to respond
- Summarizes requirements
- Requests capability statement



Common Purposes

- Is there anybody capable of performing the work?
- Is there competition available?
- Are there 2 or more capable small businesses in any category?
- Intent may be to make a sole source award or set-aside...



COMMON INFORMATION

- Solicitation hasn't been issued
- Required response date (typically is 10 days)
- Contracting office address
- Point of contact name, e-mail & telephone
- NAICS & size standard
- Brief description, scope, & size of requirement
- Period of performance
- Place of performance
- Special qualifications needed, if any (i.e. ISO / bonding or security clearances etc.)



COMMON GUIDANCE

- Include business category
- Page limitations (i.e. Limit response to (8) 8x11 pages)
- Do not submit cost proposal
- Submittal instructions
- No payment for response
- Response does not guarantee award nor exclude / include you in the acquisition process
- ***Capability elements***



COMMON CAPABILITY ELEMENTS

- *Technical capability*
 - ▶ Example:
 - Provide test data/reports/documentation indicating your products meets requirements
 - Provide proof that your firm can perform similar technical work with similar level of effort in hours & dollars



COMMON CAPABILITY ELEMENTS

(continued)

- *Related past performance*
 - ▶ Example: Provide information demonstrating that your firm has successfully performed similar work for at least 12 consecutive months within the past 5 years with a contract value of at least \$550,000 per year.
- *Related experience*
 - ▶ Relates to personnel – name person and what their duties are. (Do not use same person for 2 key elements. That tends to be too much.)



HOW TO RESPOND

- Choose notices you respond to carefully
 - ▶ Know the customer – who is the customer? (It's not usually the contracting officer)
- Read the notice closely
- DO NOT SUBMIT
 - ▶ Brochure
 - ▶ “Canned” response
- Prepare a tailored, complete submittal
- Turn synopsis into a checklist
 - ▶ Once you're sure that you've answered each item fully from your checklist
 - Edit & make sure final revisions are clean / clear and crisp
 - Make your submittal the same: clean / clear and crisp



HOW TO RESPOND

- Think of your response as a marketing tool. (But make sure that it is tailored to a notice)
- Failure to respond to all elements can cause your response to be determined as “not responsive”
 - ▶ Doesn’t mean that you are “not responsible”
 - ▶ Doesn’t mean that you are “not capable”
- No second chances on sources sought notices
 - ▶ Notices are not “reopened”
 - ▶ No negotiations or discussions
 - ▶ No debriefing required
 - ▶ Cannot be protested



Sample

- **“Interested concerns are requested to address the following specific requirements from the PWS.”**
- This statement, if included in the notice, will be followed by a short list of special requirements that are mandatory, “GO” or “NO GO.”
- You ***must demonstrate your existing capability***, or your potential to acquire capability, to meet this list of requirements by the time of the contract award date.



Suggestion

- Use as much of the allowed space for high-quality content and exposition as possible.
- If allowed 4 pages, use all 4 pages, not 3 ½.
- Emphasize your company's technical capabilities, staffing plan, transition plan/risk mitigation plan, employees' ***relevant*** qualifications, etc.



- Explain how you will meet the 50% or more requirement **to perform the tasking with your own employees and new hires**, the labor categories you plan to use within your company and the **relevant** experience and credentials your employees have to offer.
- Explain what labor categories will be covered via subcontracting and the **relevant** experience and credentials your subcontractor(s) will supply.



Think of a Capability Statement...

- as an extremely condensed technical and management proposal,
- with evidence of past performance,
- but with no cost section



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In responding to the *ability to manage* section of the Sources Sought Notice

- *Performing the tasking and managing the tasking are very different.*
- *Stating your company has performed 75% of the effort under another contract does not demonstrate your company can manage the effort.*



Many capability statements submitted by Small Businesses

- spend 100% of the space for this part of the response demonstrating that their team can manage a business,
- but not demonstrating what is actually wanted by technical reviewers –
- demonstration that you can manage this specific kind of tasking.



Recommendation

- 25% of the space to be used for business management experience,
- 75% for ***Specific*** tasking management experience.



For the ***“Technical Ability”*** ***section,***

- Describe specific approach to how you will meet requirements described in the SOW/PWS.



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HOW NOTICES ARE EVALUATED?

- Does technology exist? (if applicable)
- Does competition exist
 - ▶ Are there at least two or more companies?
 - ▶ Which small business categories or factors?
- Capabilities evaluated
 - ▶ Usually on a “go” or “no-go” basis
 - Any one “no-go” will bump you out of the running



Only what is provided will be considered!

- *The Government Reviewers are **only allowed to evaluate what you provide in the** capability statement.*



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*Tip

- Address your company's experience or capability to perform
- And/or potential to acquire capability by the time of contract award date.

- If you don't address the capability, chances are the technical reviewer will determine 'not capable'



“Capacity”

- the ability to handle the magnitude of the tasking, the amount of equipment or facilities involved, and the size of the staff needed.
- explain how you can add another contract to the existing work load.
- Which labor categories will be available from the existing labor pool.



Labor Capacity

- Explain your plan to find and attract contingent hires.
- provide the names of labor categories and correlate these positions to the experience/education of the existing employees who you will use to fill the positions, and/or who you will hire to fill the positions.



Do not provide individuals' names.



Facility Capacity

- be sure to address these even if at present you don't possess them
- ***potential to acquire capability is considered***, assessed, and given credit when it is demonstrated.



Small Businesses need to help each other get solicitations set aside for Small Business competition!

- **The Deputy for Small Business cannot get large contracts (over \$150K) set aside for competition, but, working together, Small Businesses can!**



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END RESULT

- Acquisition strategy determined
 - ▶ Sole source award, if appropriate
 - ▶ Set-aside under FAR Part 19
 - ▶ Full & open competition
- Anyone eligible may then compete
 - ▶ Whether you responded or not to sources sought

