

Questions and Answers AG-645S-S-08-0002

The following two questions refer to the following sections:

Section C, Paragraph C.3 (page 14)
Section C, Paragraph C.6 (page 20)
Section G, Paragraph G.5 (page 50)
Section G, Paragraph G.7.1, (page 51)

1. With respect to the ordering of services, please clarify whether the Government will decide on a task-order-by-task-order basis the single “awardee pool” in which a Task Order Request will be competed since the Large Business, Small Business and SDVOSB award pools all include Functional Area 5 in their respective Statements of Work.

A: For Functional Areas 1-4 work, only the three contractors who received the awards under the two set-aside contracts will compete for task orders. For Functional Area 5 work, all six contractors who received awards from the two set-aside contracts and the full and open competition contract will compete for work. There will not be a case-by-case selection of which contractor can and cannot compete. The only determining factor in who can/cannot compete is the type of work, i.e., which Functional Area the work in the individual task order is derived.

2. If a specific pool will be selected to compete for a Task Order Request on a task-order basis, can vendors conclude that the three “pools” will not compete directly against each other for a Task Order within Area 5?

A: No. All six contractors who received awards will compete for any and all task orders issued for work derived from Functional Area 5.

3. Reference Paragraph C.1 and C.2 – At various locations in these paragraphs there is reference to the “Statement of Work” and to the “Performance Work Statement.” Since no performance metrics are specified and none were requested to be submitted in the proposal, is it correct to assume that Section C of the solicitation provides a Statement of Work (SOW)?

A: Yes.

4. Reference Paragraph C.7.1 Key Management Personnel – Is it desired that the proposal identify Key Management Personnel even if those key personnel may not be in a direct charge status – such as key contract manager or project control personnel?

A: As described in Section L.12.1.3 – Subfactor 2.4(b), this RFP requires the resume of the proposed program manager for Kansas City, MO. The other required key personnel will be identified later in the task order proposals

5. Reference Paragraph C.8 – Many of the Labor Categories listed do not have education requirements identified. Is it up to the contractor to determine what the education requirements for these labor categories will be and what experience may substitute for the education?

A: Yes, any additional requirements will be addressed in individual task orders.

6. Reference Paragraph E.5 – Do the terms “in writing” and “written” in this paragraph and elsewhere in the solicitation mean electronic submission via email.

A: Do not see “in writing” or “written” in Section E.5. However, generally email is acceptable unless otherwise notified.

7. Reference Paragraph H.2 – Does the Government desire proposed contract and task order close out procedures to be included in the proposal?

A: No.

8. Ref. Paragraph H.3.1 - Reference second paragraph, second line “...(including both mainstream and miscellaneous support categories).” Please define “mainstream” and “miscellaneous” as no such distinction is included in the Para C.7 and C.8 labor categories.

A. Reference is to be deleted from solicitation.

9. Ref. Paragraph H.3.1(d) – this para refers to both a Project Manager and a Program Manager – please clarify. Does this “Project Manger” relate to the task order Project Leader?

A: They are the same in this paragraph. However “Project” Manger will be changed to “Program” Manager.

10. Ref. Paragraph H.23 – The second paragraph requires documentation available in alternative formats. Does this refer only to technical papers which the contractor may request permission from the Government to publish?

A: This is documentation created by the Contractor. Details will be provided in the task orders.

11. Ref. Paragraph L.7 – refers to proposal due date specified on the SF33. When will the SF33 be issued?

A: An amendment will be issued no later than November 30, 2007 with the SF33 provided.

12. Ref. Paragraph L.12 – last line of the first paragraph refers to “...maximum pages stated in the chart below...” Please provide the chart referred to.

A: This reference will be deleted. Maximum pages are identified in Section L.11.1.

13. Ref. Paragraph L.12.1.3 – Subfactor 2.3 – Please clarify, is the Program Manager resume the only resume required to be submitted with the proposal?

A: Yes.

14. Ref. Paragraph L.13 – Are there any page count limitations for Volume II overall or for any of the tab sections of that volume?

A: Volume II only has no page limits such that each Tab is limited to the documents required in that particular Tab with no extraneous self-serving, i.e. company advertising materials, presented. Tab A is limited to a description of any and all exceptions/deviations taken. If none taken then it will be empty. Tab B is limited to those documents described in Paragraph L.13.2. Tab E is the only Tab with no page limit but it is to be presented on a CD per Paragraph L.13.5

15. Ref. Paragraph L.13.5 – identifies “no page limit.” Does this imply that there are page limits on the other tabs of Volume II? If so, please identify those page limits.

A: Please see response above.

16. Will a proposal evaluation debriefing be provided if requested?

A. Yes. Reference FAR 15.506(a)(1) “An offeror, upon its written request received by the agency within 3 days after the date on which that offeror has received notification of contract award in accordance with 15.502(b), shall be debriefed...”

17. Ref. Paragraph C.6.4, E-commerce is a very broad area. Can the FSA further clarify its e-commerce requirements so we can target our response accordingly?

A: It has been decided that E-Commerce shall be removed from the FAST RFP.

18. Ref. Paragraph C.6.5, Program Evaluation Software – Since this is not an industry term, can you please provide clarification or guidance with respect to this business category?

A: The Government is removing Program Evaluation Software from the FAST RFP. “GIS Enhanced Planning” remains.

19. Ref. Paragraph B.5 – Please clarify that the reference to paragraph B.4.b in paragraph B.5 should be a reference to paragraph B.3.5(b) on page 11.

A: Correction will be made to final copy. Reference is to paragraph B.3.5(b).

20. Ref. Paragraph C.7.1, fourth paragraph – Please clarify that the reference to *Attachment G* in C.7.1 should be a reference to *Attachment F*.

A: Correction will be made in final copy. Reference is to Attachment F.

21. Ref. Paragraph C.6.5 – Since Functional Area (FA) 5 is part of the Small Business Set-Aside solicitation (AG-645S-S-08-0001), can small business vendors conclude that if they want to respond to FA5 as a small business, they can provide their response as part of a proposal under the small business set-aside solicitation (recognizing that FA5 is not set-aside) and do not have to provide a separate response to solicitation AG-645S-S-08-0003 that is designated for full and open competition?

A: Contractors shall respond to **all** Functional Areas of Section C in their proposals for AG-645S-S-08-0001. If contractors want to respond only to Functional Area 5 whether they are small business or not, they would do so by responding only to AG-645S-S-08-0003.

22. Ref. Cover Page, paragraph questions submission date – Does the Government plan to answer questions as they receive questions or will the Government answer all questions submitted after the December 21, 2007 deadline?

A: It is the Government’s intent to post the first round of Q&A’s on November 19, 2007 with weekly updates when available.

23. Ref. Cover Page, paragraph questions submission date – If the Government will answer questions in a “rolling” fashion, how often can vendors expect to see questions and answers?

A: See response to Question #22.

24. Ref. The answer to question 18 for the draft RFP stated, “The solicitation is expected to include several examples of anticipated task orders.” – The final RFP does not contain any “anticipated task orders,” but the final RFP states for Subfactor 2.2, Technical Approach: “An acceptable rating is met when the offeror provides evidence that they have identified the key technical task areas that require technical assistance in implementation and guidance of the solution and will be evaluated as to appropriateness, comprehensiveness and technical

soundness of the Contractor's schedule and detailed plan for carrying out the contract work. The contractor's detailed plan indicates they have provided enough experience to meet the Government requirement." In the absence of any example task orders, it is unclear what topics are to be covered in a detailed plan. Can the Government provide more specific guidance on the intended content of the required detailed plan?

A: The Government is expecting contractors to elaborate on their understanding, capability and methodologies of the work described in the RFP. At contractors' discretion, they may include a sample project plan with a work breakdown structure proving that they understand how to achieve the work in the solicitation.

25. Ref. Section C.7, the RFP states "All staff employed by the Contractor shall meet or exceed the requirements listed in each category description." AND Section C.8.1 specifies that Project Leaders have the following qualifications: "General Experience: Six (6) years of progressive IT software development and software management experience using structured system development methodologies, as well as systems life cycle management methodology. Specialized Experience: Includes four (4) years of experience managing and controlling system development projects using systems life cycle management, system development methodologies and structured analysis and design techniques. Project experience includes client-server, web-enabled and standalone applications." - These requirements seem to be specifically applicable only to Functional Area 5. Will the Government provide experience requirements for Task Leaders that are more applicable to Functional Areas 1-4?

A: Specific requirements for project leaders will be provided in each individual task order issued.

26. Ref. Subfactor 2.1: Software Development Standards Processes. – Why is there a separate subfactor for Software Development Processes? Wouldn't these be evaluated under Subfactor 2.2, in describing an Offeror's technical approach to Functional Area 5? Doesn't this separate Subfactor cause software development to be weighted too heavily in the small business procurement?

A: The Government determined that this type of information is needed for all of the FAST solicitations.

27. Ref. Section C.6 Functional Area Descriptions – Each functional area lists a variety of examples of requirements that could be included in Task Orders. For example, Functional Area 1 lists 19 somewhat disparate requirements. Is the Offeror's proposal required to address each of these various requirements in order to receive a higher rating for Subfactor 2.2 Technical Approach?

A: As stated above, the Government is expecting contractors to elaborate on their understanding, capability and methodologies of the work described in the RFP.

28. Ref. Paragraph B.3.1(b) states program management costs associated with contract-level management, reporting requirements and related travel and meeting attendance costs for the contractor's program management staff are billed separately from individual task order "project leader" support costs as hourly labor rates against individual task orders. AND Paragraph L.2(b)(1)(i) states that the fully burdened labor rates shall include a rate to accommodate the cost of the contract level program management specified in Section B.3.1(2) "Contractor Site Rates." - From these references it is unclear whether the Program Manager labor is to be charged direct to individual Task Orders or is to be considered an indirect cost. Please clarify. Since a fully burdened labor rate for the Program Manager is to be included in the Pricing Table, it is assumed that the Program Manager's labor is billed direct to individual TO's.

A: Program Manager labor rate is to be billed under individual task orders.

29. Ref(s) Section L.13.2 states that the offeror shall provide copies of its approved accounting and purchasing systems. Section M.4.2 – Tab B also refers to copies of approved accounting and purchasing systems. However, there is no requirement for the approval of either system.

A: The reference will be removed.

30. Ref. Section L.12.1.3 Tab C – Factor 2: Understanding the Requirement states "An acceptable rating is met when the offeror provides evidence that they have identified the key technical task areas that require technical assistance in implementation and guidance of the solution and will be evaluated as to appropriateness, comprehensiveness and technical soundness of the Contractor's schedule and detailed plan for carrying out the contract work. The contractor's detailed plan indicates they have provided enough experience to meet the Government requirement. The Offeror's technical approach shall address the full scope of the statement of work for this solicitation. – A detailed plan with schedule would be an appropriate request for an individual Task Order but this requirement is too broad for the Government's requirements as documented in Section C. Recommend providing specific guidance on the key technical tasks to be addressed to ensure a consistent evaluation across all Offerors' proposals or delete the requirement for a detailed plan and schedule.

A: The Government is expecting contractors to elaborate on their understanding, capability and methodologies of the work described in the RFP. At a contractor's discretion, it may include a sample project plan with a work breakdown structure proving it understands how to achieve the work in the solicitation.

31. Ref. Section L.3 indicated the Government intends to award three (3) small business IDIQ contracts. Will one of these 3 awards be to a service disabled veteran-owned (SDVO) small business?

A: The Government intends to award two (2) awards under the small business set-aside and one (1) award under the SDVOSB set-aside, and three awards under the full and open competition solicitation.

32. Are large firms allowed to bid as a subcontractor on a small business team if they are bidding on the large business solicitation?

A: You need to clarify this question in regards to which solicitation and the type of team, i.e., a large business can respond as the prime or as a sub on the full and open solicitation. However a large business can only be a member of a team with its part being less than 49% when responding to the SB set-aside or the SDVOSB set-aside.

33. Is there a list of potential bidders available?

A: I refer you to the AMD website <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/amd>. Each solicitation has its own potential bidders list.

34. Ref. Paragraph L.13.7 Notes to Offerors, paragraph 1, page 125 says that "Offerors shall provide its technical response in both the written format described in Section L and on one (1) CD" but Section L.12 on page 115 requires two CD copies of both proposal volumes. Please indicate which number of CDs is correct.

A: Section L.12 shall be corrected to "two."

35. Ref. Paragraph M.3, paragraph 2 describing Subfactor 2.2, page 127, notes that evaluation of the Technical Approach will include the factors "Complexity" and "Technical Methodology." – Will the Government please provide additional insight into how "complexity" will be evaluated?

A: The following is an example of different types of complex activities:

Examples of Highly Complex Activities:

Designing and delivering software applications that:

- implement complex business rules spanning multiple business processes or applications (possibly involving processes from multiple agencies)

- implement complex interfaces between multiple external customers and business partners in various operating environments while maintaining required levels of security and performance for interactive users.
- Implement complex business using new multiple cutting edge technologies that must be synchronized to produce the business and performance results needed

Examples of Medium Complex Activities:

Designing and delivering software applications that:

- implement complex business rules within a single line of business or program delivery application while meeting security and performance requirements
- implement complex interfaces between business services and possibly COTS packages to provide the business result required while meeting security and performance requirements

Examples of Routine Activities:

Designing and delivering software applications that:

- implement business rule changes within a single line of business program delivery application while meeting security and performance requirements
- implement change requests and performance improvements within an existing business application
- implement business logic changes necessary to maintain system functionality

36. Ref. Paragraph L.13.7 Notes to Offerors, the paragraph reads: “Offeror shall provide is technical response in both the written format described in Section L and on one (1) CD. The technical response shall follow the format set forth in Attachment B (excel).” This contradicts the instructions under L.12. Please provide clarification of the proposal format/instructions for Volume I (Technical/Management Proposal) and Volume II (Contract, Small Business Participation, EVMS, Cost/Price Proposal).

A: The Government does not see any contradictory information between the sections mentioned, but for the clarification that two (2) CDs are to be submitted referring to the answer to Question #53. Section L.12 provides the instructions for Volume I’s components, which shall be provided to the Government in written form and CD. Section L.13 provides the instructions for Volume II’s components, which shall be provided to the Government in written form and CD.

As Section L.12 opening paragraph states offerors are to prepare an Original and three (3) paper copies of each volume (I & II) and two (2) CD copies of each

volume. Therefore, there will be a total of eight (8) volumes and four (4) CDs submitted by each Offeror.

37. Ref(s) Section L.13.3 (4) requests a cost breakdown for the labor rates and factors. Please note FAR 52.215-20 Requirements for Cost or Pricing Data or Information Other Than Cost or Pricing Data (Alt IV) states that “Submission of cost or pricing data is not required.” Section L.13.3 (4) also encourages contractors to propose labor rates from other Government contracts for which fair and reasonable determinations have already been made. Please confirm, in accordance with FAR 52.215-20 (Alt IV) that (a) cost breakdown information (labor, overhead, G&A, fee, etc) is NOT required and (b) previously approved/commercial prices at which the same item or similar items have previously been sold in the commercial market is adequate for evaluating the reasonableness of the price for this acquisition.

A: This section will be revised by amendment. While this is not a commercial contract and therefore the commercial rules do not apply, the FAR does require that the Contracting Officer should use every means available to ascertain whether a fair and reasonable price can be determined before requesting cost or pricing data. “Information other than cost or pricing data” means any type of information that is not required to be certified in accordance with 15.406-2 and is necessary to determine price reasonableness or cost realism. This section will be revised to clarify what information is required.

38. Ref. Paragraphs M.4.4 Tab C and M.3 – The section states “Labor and factor rates will be reviewed for cost realism, reasonableness, and understanding of the requirements.” Section M.3 Order of Importance states: “Each non-price is more important than the price factor and together the non-price factors are significantly more important than the price factor.” – If the Government receives more than three proposals for the AG-645S-S-08-0003 solicitation that rate the non-price factors in the 90% - 100% range, it seems price will be a determining factor for award. Because there are no hours quantities specified for any of the on-site or off-site rates by location, how will the Government evaluation an Offeror’s price in comparison to another Offeror? How will pricing for additional labor categories provided by Offerors as specified in L.13.2(2) (page 122) be factored into the evaluation if all offerors are not providing rates for the same labor categories in the same locations?

A: The solicitation will be amended to clarify this point.

39. Ref. Paragraph L.12.1.2, Subfactor I.1 Past Performance Questionnaires and Results the RFP requires that offerors provide “...a description of how the Offeror’s past performance demonstrates their capability and capacity to deliver high quality service and solutions. The response shall focus on the key requirements of the project, as well as the size, scope and complexity of the efforts, and relevance to the each area.” However, Section M provides no

evaluation criteria for this requirement. Please describe how past performance information submitted (not questionnaires) will be evaluated and weighted in relations to other parts of the proposal.

A: Paragraph M.3.1 defines how past performance will be reviewed. Information from the questionnaires themselves will be included in this evaluation.

40. Ref. Paragraph M.4.4 Tab D states that labor rates and factor rates will be reviewed for cost realism, reasonableness, and understanding of the requirements. – How will the Government measure cost realism, reasonableness, and understanding of the requirements? Will the offerors rates be compared against each other or against industry indices? If so, how will these results influence the selection of the three full and open awardees? If industry indices are to be used, please identify the indices.

A: Rates will be independently reviewed and evaluated to ensure that they are realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a clear understanding of the requirements, and are consistent with the various elements of the offeror's technical proposal. Use of a specific industry index is not anticipated. Comparisons to other proposed rates, historical rates paid by FSA, and industry norms and other techniques consistent with FAR Part 15.4 are anticipated.

41. Ref. Paragraph L.13.6 (5) the paragraph states that “offerors shall identify the major subcontractors, or major subcontracted effort if major subcontractors have not been selected, planned for application of the guidelines.” What criteria should an offeror use to determine if there is a “major subcontractor” for this procurement? What criteria would determine that there is, in the alternative, a “major subcontracted effort?”

A: A major subcontractor would include any subcontractor responsible for accomplishing the authorized work.

42. Will the Government prevent a contractor from bidding on Functional Area 5 Task Orders based on Organizational Conflicts of Interest as a result of the contractor subbing to a Prime that wins work on Functional Area 1? Will the Government prevent a contractor from bidding on Functional Area 5 Task Orders based on Organizational Conflicts of Interest as a result of the contractor having a sub on its team that wins work on Functional Area 1?

A: If an organizational conflict of interest exists for a specific project – i.e., IV & V tasks may not be performed by the program's developer – the contractor with the conflict will not be permitted to participate for the affected task order. The general rules of FAR Part 9.505 and paragraph H.4 will be used.

43. RFP Section H.4, Page 63 of 196, Paragraph I. USDA states that a Contractor will be precluded for any follow-on procurement of a system, subsystem, or major component, including training, for which the Contractor provides technical support services, analyses, system design and evaluation of other types of assistance ordered under the contract. Is it USDA's intent to preclude a Contractor as a source of supply for any follow-on procurement as a result of performing any and all technical support services or is it USDA's intent to only preclude a Contractor as a source of supply only where the Contractor has prepared a SOW, or designed and developed specifications or requirements as stated in Paragraph 4 of H.4? AS opposed to automatic organizational preclusion from any follow-on procurement, will USDA consider a contract-specific conflict of interest avoidance plan to result in any staff performing evaluation, systems design and requirements being separate and autonomous from other employees or divisions within the organization?

A: See FAR Part 9.505 for examples of follow-on procurements that will be impacted. Each situation is examined on the basis of its particular facts and the nature of the proposed contract effort. The underlying principles of this rule are to prevent the existence of conflicting roles that might bias a contractor's judgment and preventing unfair competitive advantage.

44. RFP Section L.12.1.2 requires "The Offeror shall identify two (2) recent and relevant Government and/or commercial efforts on which it has performed as the prime contractor." Should this information be provided for each subcontractor as well, or just for the prime?

A: The information is required of the prime contractor.

45. RFP Section L.13.5 states that "The Offeror shall include its two most recently audited annual financial statements. Any interim financial statements such as quarterly reports shall also be provided if the annual statements are more than six months old." If the Offeror does not have audited financial statements, may unaudited statements be provided?

A: The solicitation will be amended to clarify this point. If the offeror does not have audited financial statements, unaudited statements may be provided with an explanation of why audited statements are not available.

44. Is the Table of Contents part of the page count?

A: The solicitation will be amended to include cover sheet, table of contents, tabs, cover letter and tables in the exclusion from the page count.

45. Can we provide a compliance matrix outside of the page limit constraints?

A: Please clarify the compliance matrix in regards to your question.

46. Is Past Performance section outside the page limit constraints?

A: Please read Paragraph L.11.1.

47. RFP Section 12.1.2 references Attachment F. Should this instead be a reference to Attachment E?

A: Please see Question #21's response.

48. RFP Section L.12.1.3 requires that "The offeror shall provide the number of personnel currently in place within the business unit proposing on this procurement, the number of personnel, the education and professional certifications obtained by the work force, their average length of service, and the turnover rate experience of the workforce for the last three (3) year period." Should this information be provided for each subcontractor as well?

A: Yes.

49. Should Section K, Representations and Certifications be included in Tab B of Volume II?

A: Yes.

50. Should the Offeror return RFP Attachment C with the proposal?

A: Yes.

51. Past Performance: Should the offeror provide the past performance information required in sub factor 1.1 within the proposal response or should it be provided just in the past performance questionnaire?

A: The past performance questionnaire is provided by an offeror's customers. The offeror is to attempt to ensure that its customers provide the questionnaire to the Contract Specialist so that the offeror is given consideration for them as a part of its proposal. The past performance information discussed in Paragraph L.12.1.2 provides the appropriate information evaluated under subfactor 1.1. Please review Paragraph L.12.1.2 for this information.

52. L.12, Subfactor 2.2, The RFP indicates "An acceptable rating is met when the offeror provides evidence that they have identified the key technical task areas that require technical assistance in implementation and guidance of the solution and will be evaluated as to appropriateness, comprehensiveness and technical soundness of the Contractor's schedule and detailed plan for carrying out the contract work." The RFP identifies the key technical areas for each Functional

Area in Section C. Is the Government's expectation for the contractor to develop a subset of those requirements as Key Technical Areas?

A: Yes.

53. Functional Areas Descriptions: Is it possible to get some more information on each of the bullets listed within the 5 functional areas of section C.6?

A: More specific information will be provided in each of the task orders request for proposals.

54. Ref. C.6.3 Functional Area 3. Virus detection/recovery monitoring – Does the FSA need virus protection for a large enterprise network, backup tapes, firewall and/or desktops?

A: It has been decided that Virus detection/recovery monitoring shall be removed from this RFP. The solicitation will be amended to reflect this change.

55. Ref. C.6.4 Functional Area 4. E-commerce is a very broad area. Can the FSA further clarify its e-commerce requirements so we can target our response accordingly?

A: It has been decided that E-Commerce shall be removed from this RFP. The solicitation will be amended to reflect this change.

56. Ref. C.6.5 Functional Area 5, Program evaluation software – Since this is not an industry term, can you please provide clarification or guidance with respect to this business category?

A: It has been decided that Program Evaluation Software shall be removed from this RFP. The solicitation will be amended to reflect this change.

57. Does the USDA have any published software standards? If yes, where may these documents be accessed for review during proposal preparation?

A: Yes. All Vendors attending the FAST Industry Day received a copy of the SDLC on CD. We can provide additional copies if needed. In addition there are many Federal and USDA standards that must be followed; some are referenced in the SDLC. To request a copy of the CD please send an email request to the contract specialist responsible for this RFP, Liz Green with your address, at Elizabeth.green@kcc.usda.gov.

58. Ref. Paragraph C.6.2 – Functional Area 2. Please clarify what is meant by the last bullet item “User Acceptance Certification Testing.”

A: User Acceptance Certification Testing includes:

- documentation of test cases in the Agency defined test tool with results upon test completion;
- verifying automated software functionality meets user requirements and other change request documentation. (May include recommendations to improve functionality or user experience)
- conducting 508 Testing
- verifying FSA Standards for look and feel and best business practices have been met
- verifying database/file updates are correct and have an appropriate audit trail
- ensuring security access controls are appropriate and properly enforced
- providing maintenance and troubleshooting of test tools

59. Ref. C.6.3 – Functional Area 3: Information Security and Other Computer-Related Services, Independent Verification & Validation:

(a) What systems are in-scope for the IV&V requirement?

A: Requirements are unknown at this time. This is a placeholder to obtain the qualified skills to perform and IV&V if needed.

(b) With the IV&V requirement support the accreditation decision of FSA's Major applications and General Support Systems?

A: This depends on the purpose of the IV&V. Usually FSA is working within USDA and Federal guidance and if the IV&V is related would fall under FSA and the higher level decisions.

(c) Does this requirement include application code review of government-off-the-shelf (GOTS) applications for functionality?

A: Not sure of the meaning of GOTS. However, no known IV&V's are planned but it certainly could include applications, processes, security, etc.

(d) Does this requirement include application code review of government-off-the-shelf (GOTS) applications for security?

A: Not sure of the meaning of GOTS. However, no known IV&V's are planned but it certainly could include applications, processes, security, etc.

(e) Is this IV&V requirement being used to replace a current Quality Assurance or Configuration Management software development process?

A: IV&V's have been conducted when a need is recognized and doesn't replace current processes although the IV&V may result in process changes.

60. **A: Digital Libraries: It has been decided that Digital Library support shall be removed from this RFP. The solicitation will be amended to reflect this change. Therefore, these questions will not be answered:**

- How does the Digital Library support the FSA's mission?
- Who is the target audience for the Digital Library?
- What is the current maturity level of the Digital Library: preliminary, planning, production?
- What type of materials are currently (or will be) stored in this Digital Library?
- What type of hardware is the Digital Library hosted on?
- Is there a browser-based interface? If so, what type of web application hosts the site (e.g. Microsoft IIS, Apache, etc.)?
- If a browser-based interface is employed, is website design in scope for this requirement? If so, what type of design software is used and will the government provide this software?
- Where is the Digital Library physically housed?
- Is the digital library accessible from the Internet to the public?
- Is an ID and password necessary to access the Digital Library? If so, what technology stores the ID and password and provides authentication? (e.g. eAuth, Active Directory, Databases, etc.)
- How often is the content updated now?
- Does the government expect the contractor to update the site more frequently than is current done? If so, what is the desire frequency of content update?
- How is the digital material created? (e.g. typing, scanning, purchased, etc.)
- Who will be responsible for content creation, the government or the contractor?
- How is new content posted or existing content updated now? Is this the expectation the FSA has of the contractor?
- Are data/record conversions in scope for this requirement? If so, what percentage of the contractor's time will be spent with data/record conversion activities?
- Are cataloging and indexing in scope for this requirement? If so, what percentage of the contractor's time will be spent with Cataloging and indexing activities?

61. Will the Government prevent a contractor from bidding on Functional Area 5 Task Orders based on Organizational Conflicts of Interest as a result of the Contractor subbing to a Prime that wins work on Functional Area 1?

A: See response to question #63.

62. Will the Government prevent a contractor from bidding on Functional Area 5 Task Orders based on Organizational Conflicts of Interest as a result of the contractor having a sub on its team that wins work on Functional Area 1?

A: See response to question #63.

63. Ref. Paragraph H.4 Organizational Conflict of Interest and Limitation of Future Contracting – Will the Government allow an offeror to submit an Organizational Conflict of Interest Mitigation Plan to a single performing division level, at the IDIQ level or task order level, so that another performing division within a company is not precluded from solicitations for acquisition of a system, subsystem, or major component thereof?

A: It is possible that the Government will allow this, however there are no guarantees and each request/issue shall be reviewed on a case by case basis.

64. Regarding Schedule – Does the Government have an estimated timeframe for notification of the IDIQ awardees?

A: The Government intends to notify the awardees in March 2008.

65. Does the Government have an estimated release timeframe for the first Task Orders to be administered under the FAST IDIQ?

A: The first task order RFP's will be sent out to selected contractors shortly after selections are made. Current contract efforts that are known to be considered for the FAST IDIQ contracts expire on May 20, 2008. It is FSA's intention to have all of these task orders in place before the current contracts expire. New task order efforts, if identified, may have different start dates.

66. What start date should contractors assume for Year 1?

A: A specific start date for the five-year IDIQ contracts has not been identified, however it is anticipated to be sometime during Spring 2008. Each task order will have its own start date. Labor rates are not dependent on the start date of the contract and the offeror should identify the period of time each set of rates is applicable in their proposal.

67. Contractor X recognizes the importance of the software development function to FSA, and we have built a team that can provide superior support to FSA in that critical area. However, since only small businesses will be competing for the TO's issued against Functional Areas 1 – 4, we believe that it is in the best interest of the government to increase the evaluation weighting of these areas relative to Functional Area 5. Our assessment of the RFP and the initial response

to questions leads us to conclude that Functional Area 5 is disproportionately weighted in the small business procurements.

A: While the Government does not agree with Contractor X's analysis, the Government reiterates the language in L.12.1.3 Tab C, Subfactor 2.1: Software Development Standards Processes which states that "...information is needed on the stable and repeatable standard and consistent processes used within the organization for both software engineering and management activities." Paragraph L.12.1.3 should be reviewed so that the contractor can see that in its entirety it is focused on all aspects of software issues, not simply development, and that these issues cover the spectrum of all the Functional Areas. Therefore, Subfactor 2.1 applies across all five Functional Areas in some shape or manner and not to the preference on Functional Area 5. For all of the Functional Areas in Section C utilize "...software...management activities" in some manner.

Therefore based on the above answer, the Government will not be responding to the below questions:

While a precise set of weighting factors was not provided, one can infer an estimate from the guidance provided as follows (using 100 points for the overall Technical/Management Proposal)

Evaluation Factors	RFP Guidance	Weighting
Factor 1: Past Performance –	Each non-price is more important than the price factor and together the non-price factors are significantly more important than the price factor.	40%
1.1 Past Performance Questionnaires	The Questionnaire subfactor is significantly more important than the Certifications, Quality Recognition and Awards subfactor.	30%
1.2 Certifications, Quality Recognition and Awards		10%
Factor 2 Understanding the Requirement	Understanding the Requirement is more important than Past Performance.	60%
2.1 S/W Dev Standards Processes	The Software Development Standards Processes and Technical	25%
2.2 Technical Approach	Approach subfactors are equal to each other and significantly more important than both the Program Management and Quality Control and Staffing subfactors.	25%

2.3 Program Management and Quality Control	Program Management and Quality Control and Staffing subfactors which are ... equal to one another.	5%
2.4 Staffing		5%

From these rough estimates, one could conclude that each Functional Area as evaluated under “Technical Approach” would have an equal value of 5 points. However, Subfactor 2.1 alone has a weighting of 25%, so the overall Software Development area would seem to have a weighting of $25 + 5 = 30\%$. Even if Functional Areas 1 - 4 are added together, they have a weighting of only 20 points.

Essentially, it is the inclusion of Subfactor 2.1 as a separate and highly-weighted criterion that we believe heavily skews the evaluation toward software development to the detriment of the other functional areas. While it might be possible to interpret Subfactor 2.1 more generally, the title “**Software Development Standards Processes**” does not support the more general interpretation nor does the specific reference to “software engineering” in the requirements. Additionally, since the exact same wording is used for “Understanding the Requirement” and the Evaluation Factors in both the Small Business RFP and the Full and Open RFP, it appears no tailoring of the RFP to address the unique nature and importance of Functional Areas 1 – 4 is intended.

To provide a better balance to the evaluation of all five functional areas, we recommend one of the following options:

1. Re-title Subfactor 2.1 to capture a more general focus on process controls and evaluate responses based on the more general focus without favoring specific software development process descriptions, or
2. Integrate Subfactor 2.1 into the evaluation of Functional Area 5. For the purposes of this procurement, each of the functional areas has its own unique set of applicable processes and there is fundamentally no need to give more weight to software processes over those applicable to the other functional areas; or
3. Evaluate Subfactor 2.1 and Functional Area 5 on simple “Pass/Fail” criteria. FSA could set the bar high enough to ensure the winner would be qualified to compete for Functional Area 5 task orders but the final awards would be determined by teams evaluated highest in Functional Areas 1 – 4.

Why Functional Areas 1 – 4 Are Important to FSA, and Should Receive Higher Evaluation Weighting in the SBSAs:

- The intent of the FAST PWS appears to be a vehicle by which FSA can receive the best services for each stage of the IT lifecycle. Without equalizing the weighting of the evaluation criteria, the procurement may result in vehicle with 5 exceptional SW development companies.
- Strong, process-oriented software development is important but will only result in an optimized solution if planned, funded, and consistent with the

FSA EA (FA 1); integrated with existing platforms and network capacity (FA 2); certified and accredited (FA3); and rolled out to a user base that is well-trained (FA4). Therefore, all 5 functional areas are equally important in the IT lifecycle.

- There may be a risk to FSA that the imbalance of the weighting across functional areas may result in awardees that are strong in area 5 but not as strong in areas 1 through 4, thus reducing the competition for TOs in the other 4 areas.