Sources Sought Notices are posted in FedBizOpps (FBO) – the single government entry point for federal government procurement opportunities over $25,000. The number of Sources Sought notices appearing has been on the rise. An FBO search of these notices posted in the last 30 days shows 1,743 results. What is a Sources Sought and should you respond to them? This edition of the eBusiness newsletter will address these topics.

What is a Sources Sought Notice?

FBO defines a Sources Sought Notice as "a synopsis posted by a government agency that states they are seeking possible sources for a project. It is not a solicitation for work, nor is it a request for proposal". The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 5.201(c) states "The primary purposes of the notice are to improve small business access to acquisition information and enhance competition by identifying contracting and subcontracting opportunities."

Simply put, a Sources Sought Notice is the government's way of identifying the interests and capabilities of the marketplace by requesting specific information prior to the release of a solicitation. They are primarily used as market research to determine if there is potential for a contract to be set aside for small business or other small business set-aside programs.

Is a Sources Sought Notice different than a Request for Information (RFI)?

FAR Part 15.201(e) states that RFIs may be used when the Government does not presently intend to award a contract, but wants to obtain price, delivery, other market information, or capabilities for planning purposes. Responses to these notices are not offers and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract.

Sources Sought Notices and RFI's are often used interchangeably. An advanced search in FBO for Sources Sought Notices under the section titled "Opportunity/Procurement Type" will include RFI's.

Should you Respond to Sources Sought Notices?

Yes! But first take the time to identify those that are a good fit for your business. Depending on the information requested, responding can be an investment of time. This investment, however, can pay off in having the contract set aside for small business or even potentially create a sole source opportunity. Formally responding to a sources sought notice creates the opportunity to follow up with the point of contact and offer your suggestions on performing the work. It may also state in the notice that only those companies that submitted responses to the source sought may submit a response if a solicitation is issued.

How do you Respond to a Sources Sought Notice?

Each Sources Sought Notice is different so you must carefully read the notice to know how to respond. It is important to respond exactly as requested – do not provide any more or less information. Some notices will require very little in response such as company name, address, DUNS number, NAICS, and business size (Small, 8(a), HUBZone, Woman, Service Disabled Veteran, etc.) while others will ask for very detailed information. Many will require sending a capability statement so you should have one prepared that you can tailor to specific notices as needed. Samples of varying degrees of information requested are on the following page.
Samples (Edited for eBusiness Newsletter)

Sample 1

The Government is seeking qualified, and experienced sources interested in establishing a firm-fixed priced Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA). The government is requesting that interested concerns capable of satisfying the requirements in Attachment 1 and 2 furnish the following information:

1. Company name, address, point of contact, voice and fax telephone numbers and e-mail address.
2. Type of business, (i.e., small, small disadvantaged, woman-owned, Hub Zone, servicized-disabled veteran-owned small business, large business, etc.), under North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 323117, which contains a size standard of 500 employees, CAGE Code and DUNS Number.
3. Under which NAICS code does your company usually provide the requirements described in the attachment? Please provide rationale for your answer if different from NAICS 323117.
4. The Government request information from industry as to their best practices and/or commercial terms and condition for establishing pre-priced BPAs when the titles are not known in advance.

E-mail responses to this request for information are preferred. The due date and time for responses to this RFI is at 3:00 pm Central Standard Time on 27 Apr 2015.

Sample 2

Sources responding to this request for information must provide the following information:

1. Please provide the following point of contact information: Company, Address, Point of Contact, Phone Number, Fax Numbers, Email Address.
2. Brief summary of the company, of no more than 3 paragraphs.
3. Describe qualifications in sensor technology engineering, administrative and operations support, such as field technology assistance, test and evaluation, research and development, and services for night vision and electronic sensor systems for this effort or like efforts.
4. Under the current SB recertification regulations, do you anticipate your company remaining a small business, under primary stated NAICS code 541712?
5. If you are a small business and plan to be prime contractor on this effort please inform how you will meet the limitations on subcontracting Clause 52.219-14.
6. If you are a small business, can you go without a payment for 90 days?
7. If you are a small business does your company have experience as a prime contractor administering contracts? If you answered yes, please provide as much of the following information as possible; contract number(s); dollar value; and similarity of scope and effort. Do you have experience as a prime producing commercial items that may be of similar scope, complexity and nature.
8. Does your company possess the capabilities to provide the entire range of these requirements? If not, please list which requirements your company can provide?
9. Is your company planning on business arrangements with other companies, please list the process used in selecting the members?
10. Please provide details regarding proposed joint ventures, teaming arrangements, strategic alliances, or other business arrangements to satisfy these requirements. Offerors are encouraged to identify teams, indicating each team member's size based upon the NAICS code of the work that the team member may be doing.
11. Has your company performed this type of effort or similar type effort (to include size and complexity) in the past, if so please provide contract number, point of contact, e-mail address, phone number, and a brief description of your direct support of the effort?
12. What are the core competencies of your employees that would support these requirements? Also, provide the total number of individuals currently employed by your company that are capable of supporting the requirements.
13. Does your company have a TOP SECRET facility clearance or have access to one should it be required?
15. Is your company currently providing similar items to another government agency (you may also include contract #s for government) or other non-government customer? If so, please identify the agency or non-government customer, point of contact, e-mail address, phone number, and a brief description of your direct support of the effort. If you are unwilling to share your customer's identity, please address whether your company offers the same or similar items commercially.

No further information or documentation will be provided. The Government requests that interested sources submit an electronic response of not more than twenty (20) pages, 8.5 quote mark x 11 quote mark paper, 12-point, Times New Roman font, with a minimum of one (1) inch margins all around. Responses to Small Business Questions 4 thru 16 are in addition to the above stated twenty (20) page limitation. Responses should include the company name, CAGE code, point of contact, and address. Responsible sources having relevant experience may submit their statement of interest and technical capabilities. They should also identify whether they are a Small Business, Very Small Business, Small Disadvantaged Business, 8(a) Program Small Business, Women-owned Small Business, HUB Zone Small Business, Veteran-Owned Small Business, Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business, and/or a Native American Small Business under the proposed NAICS code 541712. Responses should also include the company name, CAGE code, point of contact, and address. All information received in response to this Sources Sought Synopsis that is marked quote mark Proprietary quote mark will be handled accordingly. Responses will not be returned nor will receipt be confirmed.

If you are interested in identifying Sources Sought Notices that pertain to your business follow these steps:
1. Go to www.fbo.gov
2. Click on “advanced search form”
3. Choose "Posted Date". We recommend choosing last 30 days for most current notices
4. Select Sources Sought under "Opportunity/Procurement Type"
5. Refine search with other criteria pertaining to your business (keywords, NAICS, specific agency, etc.)
6. Click “search” for list of opportunities

As always, contact the GACO/GCAC office if you have questions or need assistance with preparing responses to Sources Sought Notices http://www.calu.edu/business-community/government-agency-coordination-office/index.htm.