

Food Service Management Contract Pre-Bid Conference Guidance

Introduction

School food authorities (SFAs) may be required by local procurement policies or may choose to conduct a pre-bid conference, also referred to as a pre-bid meeting. If this is the first procurement for meal services by the school food authority, conducting a pre-bid conference may be very beneficial to both the SFA and the prospective bidders. Following is general guidance that should be considered when planning a pre-bid conference.

Attendance

Attendance at the conference by prospective bidders is strongly recommended but not required for submittal of a bid.

Scheduling

It is recommended that the conference be scheduled at least ten days after the public advertisement and distribution of the bid packets to provide sufficient notice to all prospective bidders. Announcement of the pre-bid conference should be included in both the bid packet and the public advertisement.

In addition, the conference should be scheduled at least 18 days prior to the bid opening date to allow the SFA sufficient time to issue written addenda/amendments that may result from the conference and for bidders to subsequently prepare their bids. Hence, a minimum 30-day solicitation period is required by the Vermont Agency of Education.

Purpose

1. Provide information and clarification regarding contract specifications that will assist in the preparation of bids
2. Answer questions (take detailed notes; then provide answers in writing—see Addenda/Amendments/Questions and Answers below)
3. State that clarifications, exceptions, and/or alternate bids will result in disqualification
4. Conduct a facility tour
5. Discover ambiguities, errors, or omissions in the Request for Proposals/Invitation for Bids (RFP/IFB) that may later be corrected through written addenda or amendments to the RFP/IFB

The conference should NOT be held as a substitute for formally amending a deficient or ambiguous specification or to disseminate performance requirements in addition to those contained in the solicitation.



Addenda/Amendments/Questions and Answers

It should be stated at the opening of the pre-bid conference that information provided should not be considered official until provided in writing to all prospective bidders that have received the RFP/IFB. Oral explanations or instructions given before the award of the contract shall not be binding. Any information given to a prospective bidder shall be furnished to all prospective bidders that received the original solicitation/contract as an addendum or amendment to the solicitation/contract.

Process

1. Advertise and Distribute Bid Packets
2. 10 Day period
3. Pre-Bid Conference
4. During the next 18 days
 - a. Issue Addenda/RFP amendments up to 7 business days to bid opening
5. Bid Opening

Questions?

Contact Michael Carr at (802) 828-2093 or by email at Michael.carr@vermont.gov.