

PROCUREMENT SOLICITATION DOCUMENT



The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS)

A Cooperative Purchasing Program available for membership by Government and Other Entities in all fifty states.

Lead Agency



Region 8 Education Service Center

4845 US Hwy. 271 North, Pittsburg, Texas 75686 - Toll-free (866) 839-8477

www.tips-usa.com

E-mail: bids@tips-usa.com

NOTICE TO PROPOSERS

DEADLINE DATE FOR ALL PROPOSALS TO BE RECEIVED ELECTRONICALLY

or otherwise is:

August 11, 2017 at 3:00 P.M. Local Time

The solicitation documents may be found at <https://tips.ionwave.net>

If a problem is encountered accessing the solicitation, please contact TIPS at the address or phone listed above for help.

This solicitation is a Request for Proposals as permitted in the Texas Education Code § 44.031 for the category:

RFP 170701 Employee Benefit Products and Services

NOTICE: The use of the terms Solicitation, Bid, Request for Proposals, RFP, Request for Competitive Sealed Proposals, RCSP, or other specific terms may not be accurate in legal terminology and should be construed to mean the method of competitive procurement listed above with the legal citation of the source of the procurement method. Example: "This Solicitation is a Request for Proposals as permitted in the Texas Education Code Section 44.031".

General Information

FINANCING OF TIPS

TIPS Vendor Paid Fee for RFP 170701 Employee Benefit Products and Services

The total cost of the TIPS program, in most cases, is primarily funded through an administration fee paid to TIPS by the awarded contractors. The fee is based on actual vendor project sales. Vendor will pay the fee on the actual invoiced and paid sales to TIPS members. Fees are not assessed to vendors for shipping cost, required bond cost, or any taxes that may be applicable.

TIPS establishes a fee for each solicitation for proposals that is in the best interest of TIPS and its members.

The fee schedule for agreements awarded under solicitation is 2% of member and employee total premium.

Term of Agreement and Renewals

The initial term of the agreement is one year. Awarded agreements may be renewed on the annual agreement award date for two additional consecutive one year terms if sales have been successfully reported to TIPS and if both parties agree. THIS CLAUSE CONTROLS OVER ANY OTHER TERM IN ANY OTHER PART OF THIS SOLICITATION. TIPS reserved the right to solicit proposals at any time it is in the best interest of TIPS and/or its members.

Vendor Questions

Questions about the specific SOLICITATION shall be submitted to bids@tips-usa.com with the following in the subject line: "SOLICITATION NAME #xxxxxx contractor question". Questions of a ministerial nature will be answered without an addendum, but questions of a substantive nature that are not addressed in the SOLICITATION or deemed relevant to the process by TIPS will be addressed by properly posted addendum.

QUESTIONS WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL August 4, 2017 AT NOON Local Time.

Pre-Bid Meeting (Not Mandatory)

**A Pre-Bid Meeting may be requested by any proposer, if you wish to request a Pre-Bid Meeting, please email bids@tips-usa.com
By Noon, July 26, 2017.**

If requested, a Pre-Bid meeting will be scheduled, an addendum posted and a notification will be sent by the electronic bidding system to all known interested parties.

ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE OF AWARD OR RELATED EVENT:

Posting Date	July 6, 2017	(Thursday) at 8:00 AM Local Time (1st Thurs)
Pre-Bid Meeting	July 26, 2017	(Thursday) at 9:00 AM Local Time (3rd Thurs)
<i>*If Requested?</i>		
Proposal Deadline	August 11, 2017	(Friday) at 3:00 PM Local Time (3rd Friday)
Proposal Opening	August 11, 2017	(Friday) at 3:00 PM Local Time (3rd Friday)
Proposals Reviewed	August 11, 2017	to August 18, 2017
Proposals Award	August 24, 2017	(Thursday) 8:30 AM Local Time (4th Thursday)
Award Notifications	August 24, 2017	(Thursday) 12:00 PM Local Time (4th Thursday)
	August 24, 2017	TIPS begins posting Awarded Vendors on the TIPS Website
		Responders may call for results

***Non-Award letters will be mailed to contractors with No Awards.**

Note: These Bids will stay publicly posted for 37 days.

Pricing for Line Items or Catalog

It is the intention of TIPS to establish an agreement to furnish and/or deliver all goods and services provided by awarded vendors to its members. Proposers are requested to submit a proposal for offering their complete and total line of available products and services to governmental entities, including school districts.

If a name brand is mentioned in the specifications, proposals on any reputable manufacturer's regularly produced equipment of such items of a similar nature or similarly used and substantially equivalent will be considered.

The list or category of goods or services sought by this solicitation is inclusive and not exclusive. There may be other similarly used items that are sold by the responding vendors that may be included as part of the proposing vendor's "catalog" (defined below) now or during the life of the agreement that are considered included in this solicitation and subject to the minimum discount proposed. Pricing may also be exclusively line item pricing or, and recommended, in combination with a minimum catalog discount.

Example: During the life of the agreement, models change and new products come to market that are in the same category and are added to the vendor's "catalog" and are available for purchase by users of the agreement. If you fail to propose a minimum discount off your catalog, it may limit the ability to change pricing of catalog items and services during the life of the award.

Definition of “catalog”

"Catalog" means the available list of tangible personal property or services, in the most current listing, regardless of date, during the life of the contract, that takes the form of a catalog, price list, schedule, shelf price or other form that:

- A. is regularly maintained by the manufacturer or vendor of an item; and
- B. is either published or otherwise available for inspection by a customer during the purchase process;
- C. to which the minimum discount proposed by the proposing vendor may be applied.

Adding New or Replacement Goods Items During the Life of the Agreement

Is easiest proposing a Minimum Discount off (PREFERRED MODEL) catalog prices for goods or a markup on vendor's cost of a good item. See Pricing sheets 1.

Pay Careful Attention to This When Completing the Pricing spreadsheets.

Adding New or Replacement Services During the Life of the Agreement

Is easiest proposing a Discount off (PREFERRED MODEL) catalog prices for Services because there is no manufacturer or supplier's price in which to apply a markup percentage. See Pricing sheets 2.

Pay Careful Attention to This When Completing the Pricing spreadsheet.

Explanation:

Markup on cost

It is NOT recommended proposers use the Markup pricing method because many members are not allowed to use a bid with a markup pricing method, specifically when using Federal Grant Funds. Using this pricing method may limit the effectiveness of your award.

If you choose to use the markup pricing method:

When proposing a markup on cost model, the vendor shall be required to provide proof of actual cost to the vendor of the goods sold to verify pricing markup is properly and legally applied for the sale of the goods.

NEW ITEMS: TIPS will allow the addition of new goods items to be added to the agreement when they become available to the market through the vendor under the discount off published pricing model or markup on cost model. You must stipulate a discount or markup on catalog price in the appropriate section of the pricing Excel sheet to be eligible for this option. You may stipulate discount off specific brands or lines of goods if you desire. Be thorough and concise. Any items added must be available to all customers, within legal or contractual limitations, if any. (Example: Apple products are

not permitted to be sold to the education market without special agreement from Apple but may be sold to other government customers.)

REPLACEMENT OF DISCONTINUED OR LIMITED AVAILABILITY ITEMS: When proposing a Line Item pricing model - TIPS will allow replacement items to the original list item if it is no longer manufactured or is available in limited quantities. Limited availability must be documented by a letter from the manufacturer. Vendor may replace it with an item of like kind and quality and the price will remain the same as proposed, except if it is cheaper, vendor shall lower the price accordingly and if it is more expensive due to vendor's actual cost from the manufacturer, it will be priced and the same discount shall apply as the item it replaces. Vendor shall be required to prove the pricing if the cost is higher than the original core list price to customer.

Note: If you propose a minimum Discount off catalog, you avoid this process since you are adding an item to your catalog and list price and the proposed minimum discount off catalog would apply to the new item.

Shipping cost:

Pricing should not include shipping costs. Shipping method is determined by the vendor at the time of the quote/purchase by the Member/Customer and satisfactory shipping methods and costs are agreed at that time. Shipping should be passed through at actual cost to the TIPS Member.

SPECIFICATIONS and PRICING FORMAT (EXCEL SPREADSHEET)

Proposals on any reputable manufacturers regularly produced goods falling within the general categories solicited herein will be considered for award. If a name brand is mentioned, it is only to illustrate type and quality and is not intended to restrict competition. Any list included herein is inclusive and not exclusive. There may be other similarly used items that are sold by the responding vendors that may be included as part of the proposing vendor's "catalog" (Defined above) now or during the life of the contract that are considered included in this RFP. Example: During the life of the contract, models change and new products come to market that are in the same category and are added to the vendor's "catalog" and are available for purchase by users of the contract provided the catalog discount or cost markup proposed is honored by the awarded vendor.

TIPS leaves it to the proposer to determine what goods or services that perform or serve this function and the proposer may list or include anything applicable.

This solicitation is seeking providers for: EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS) seeks proposals from companies to provide benefits communication and enrollment services for the members of The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS). In addition, the proposing company should offer expanded benefits choices to TIPS Members employees through voluntary benefits. These benefits would be 100% employee paid.

The proposing company may provide pricing for related benefit products and services, but not limited to, Group Term Life, Dental Insurance, Vision Insurance, Cancer Insurance, Catastrophic Insurance and Disability Insurance.

Please provide detailed responses to the questions below: (The Microsoft Word version of the “Company Information” questions below can be downloaded from the “Attachments” tab.)

1. Provide the legal name and address of your company.
2. Please provide a brief history of your organization including how many years your company has been providing voluntary benefit enrollment services to employers.
3. Please provide a general description of size and assets of the organization.
4. List all impartial service, industry or other ratings and/or reports regarding your company.
5. Experience and reliability of the proposer’s organization are considered in the evaluation process. Therefore, the proposer is advised to submit any information that exhibits successful and reliable experience in past performances, especially those performances related to the requirements of this RFQ. Specifically, please provide any information which demonstrates extensive experience with accounts of this size, or with other public sector accounts.
6. What other relevant services do you provide along with your voluntary benefits that would be of value to an employer?
7. Briefly describe any services you offer that could help save the TIPS members HR department time and resources.
8. How do you ensure that your agents sell employees only what they need and do not oversell?

Public Sector Specific Questions

1. Describe your company’s depth and experience in the public sector market.
2. Briefly describe any experience you have with public sector organizations that lend you extensive knowledge to working with the public sector.

Benefits Communications and Enrollment

1. Please provide a detailed description of your expertise in providing benefits communication and enrollment programs. Do you provide the same services for the TIPS member's core benefit program as you would for the benefits you offer? This description should include your recommendations for the benefits communication and/or enrollment process.
2. Proposers shall submit as a part of their Proposal a preliminary implementation plan. The plan should consist of a sequential listing of all steps necessary to provide the requested services and who is responsible.
3. Please advise as to the location, telephone number and manager of the company's regional office which would oversee the TIPS account. Preference will be given to proposers with local support staff and offices.
4. Describe how the enrollment will be organized and managed. Describe the resources necessary to accomplish the purpose of the benefits enrollment, including but not limited to local insurer support staff.
5. The individuals performing the enrollment must conduct themselves in an informational manner effectively communicating all aspects of the benefits to properly inform and educate employees. Please describe the enrollers who would be meeting with the employees? Do they have experience with public sector enrollments? Will it be necessary to significantly increase your staff in order to fulfill this contract?
6. Describe the formal training program and infrastructure you have in place for your enrollers.
7. The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS) Members prefers a provider who can help show employees what they provide for them in the area of benefits, so they can better appreciate those benefits and The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS) Members financial contributions to them. What communication and/or enrollment services make your company's proposal uniquely attractive in this regard?
8. Describe the communication pieces your company provides to assist in the enrollment process. Specifically, the TIPS members are interested in providing each employee:
 - a benefits statement
 - a salary illustration
 - an election form
9. Include a sample communication plan and samples of the communication material you will provide for employees.
10. Proposers are required to provide in their proposals a description of the proposer's Internet -based uses and any recommendations for electronic enrollment services including recommendations concerning appropriate uses of Internet based enrollment or enrollment support activities.
11. For purposes of collecting enrollment data, the contractor should make available a computer application that is fully developed, tested, and successfully installed. What are the costs associated with supporting your enrollment system?

12. The proposer should provide detail regarding their experience in designing, implementing, administering, managing and maintaining electronic enrollment services. How do you maintain data security? What fee(s) are charged for these services?
13. Please describe your multi-location/multi-state enrollment capabilities.
14. Please provide the goals and expectations you set for your service departments (i.e. how quickly do you answer the phone, how quickly do you pay claims, etc)?

Satisfaction Ratings Ratings from Plan Administrators:

1. Have you conducted plan administrator satisfaction surveys?
2. What % of plan administrators surveyed give your company positive ratings for ease of submitting billing changes?
3. What % of plan administrators surveyed give your company positive ratings for ease of use of online services?
4. What % of plan administrators surveyed are likely to recommend your company?
5. What % of plan administrators surveyed are likely to continue offering your products?

Ratings from Brokers:

1. Have you conducted broker satisfaction surveys?
2. What % of benefits brokers surveyed gave your company positive ratings for making administration of benefits plans easy for clients?
3. What % of benefits brokers surveyed gave your company positive ratings for providing a thorough, fair and objective evaluation of claims?
4. What % of benefits brokers surveyed gave your company positive ratings for being trusted to do the right thing for policyholders?
5. What % of benefits brokers surveyed gave your company positive ratings for having a positive corporate reputation?
6. What % of benefits brokers surveyed gave your company positive ratings for support provided for implementing voluntary benefits?
7. What % of benefits brokers surveyed are likely to recommend your company?

Ratings from Claimants:

1. Have you conducted claimant satisfaction surveys?
2. What % of claimants are satisfied with your company's overall handling of their claim?
3. What % of claimants are satisfied with the overall experience of submitting a claim?
4. What % of claimants are satisfied with the ease of checking claim status?
5. What % of claimants are satisfied with the simple and clear language used in your communications?

Ratings of Your Contact Center:

1. Have you conducted caller satisfaction surveys?
2. What % of the surveyed callers are satisfied that your contact center representative listened carefully to what they said and took the time to understand their request?
3. What % of the surveyed callers are satisfied that your contact center representative explained things in a way callers could understand?
4. What % of the surveyed callers are satisfied that your contact center representative was knowledgeable?
5. What % of the surveyed callers are satisfied with the courtesy and respect shown by your contact center representative?
6. What % of the surveyed callers are satisfied with the professionalism shown by your contact center representative?

Voluntary Benefits Program:

1. Please describe the voluntary benefits you propose to offer to our employees.
2. Are the plans individual contracts? Group?
3. Are you are proposing group and individual plans under a single brand? If yes, then:
 - a. Are the plan types (group vs. individual) provided by two separate subsidiaries of your parent company?
 - b. Would the TIPS member receive a single invoice that covered both plans?
 - c. How many payroll slots would you need if the TIPS member selected both types of plans?
 - d. If the TIPS member had billing issues, do you provide a toll-free number just for Plan Administrators that is separate from the toll-free number for policyholders?
 - e. If the TIPS member had billing issues, do you have one central billing department that can resolve the issues for both types of plans?
 - f. Will the TIPS member have one Account Manager for individual plans, and another for group plans?
 - g. Are claims for both types of plans handled by the same claims department?
4. How long has your company been providing voluntary benefits?
5. How often do you change the rates on your plans?
6. In what states is your company licensed to do business?
7. Are all of the proposed plans approved in all 50 states? If no, what states are approved?
8. Are your proposed products portable?
9. Are the proposed products guaranteed-renewable?
10. Is any guaranteed issue available with the proposed plans?
11. Please describe your customer service department. Do you provide a toll-free number? What are your hours of operation? Please describe services available to plan administrators as well as policyholders.

12. Can employees contact your company via the Internet?
13. Where are claims processed?
14. Do you have a call center to support plan administrators and policyholders? Are the employees “company” employees or outsourced?
15. What are your claim submission procedures?
16. What is your claim turnaround time?
17. Please describe what type of administrative services and support you would provide for each of the Benefit Plans. Include billing options and administrative support. Also, include what type of Internet-based customer service would be available. Please be very specific in this area as to what you can and cannot do.
18. Please provide copies of the actual service reports that are made available to all your customers regarding your services. How often are these updated?
19. Please provide results from employer satisfaction surveys conducted by third-party sources. How often do you perform satisfaction surveys with your employer customers?
20. Please provide detailed information on fees associated with the requested administration, communication and enrollment services described.
21. For each voluntary plan you are proposing, include benefits, rates, exclusions, etc. regarding your plan.
22. Do you require a census in order to quote on the voluntary plans?
23. Describe your ongoing quality measures for training your enrollers.
24. List & provide samples of all management and administrative reports you generate as part of the enrollment process. Please indicate frequency of reports.

Additional Services:

Bidder should list in the Pricing Sheet 2 excel spreadsheet all related supplies, equipment, services, installation, repair, maintenance, and hourly fee or other defined unit cost according to category offered on this contract. Offering must be related to this category. No inappropriate offerings will be considered.

The Contractor shall furnish all necessary labor, materials, tools, supplies, equipment, transportation, supervision, management and shall perform all operations necessary and required for services. All work shall be performed in accordance with the requirements set forth in the resulting contract and each mutually agreed upon work request or purchase order issued by TIPS participating members.

NOTHING IN THIS SOLICITATION IS REQUESTING SERVICES THAT ARE CONSIDERED A PUBLIC WORK/CONSTRUCTION.

Pricing Sheets 1 and 2 must be downloaded from the "Attachments" section, completed and uploaded to the "Response Attachments" PRICING sections.

Since the list of items a vendor may carry is potentially very long, and items are removed and added to the market frequently, it may be more advantageous to propose a **minimum discount** off your catalog for goods and services. You may offer different discounts for different brands or lines or services of goods if you choose.

A zero discount off catalog proposal is permitted, but TIPS encourage vendors to propose the best discount they feel is necessary to compete with other retailers to provide the greatest benefit to TIPS members.

Please propose a minimum discount off catalog for all non-line items proposed so you will be covered when future items are available in you catalog. By doing this, the pricing is a ceiling and not a floor. You may always lower your price or increase your minimum discount percentage to be more competitive in a particular situation

You may propose all goods as a line item list if you prefer but the PREFERRED proposal method is a minimum discount off catalog prices. Line item proposal prices may only be increased by the markup method or by application of the US Department of Labor (General (not industry specific) Consumer Price Index (CPI) percentage increase applied annually, so proposing the discount off catalog price may provide easier price adjustments but ensures that they are applied fairly to all customers of the vendor because they are published for all customers to see. **You may propose, both discount off a catalog AND line item pricing for specific lists of items if you choose to.**

Caution: Using the Markup method of pricing may exclude some members when using Federal funds as Federal regulations prohibit this type of pricing and some local regulations prohibit this type of pricing and it always requires the proposer to make available to TIPS or its members

proof of the cost of the item to the proposer to verify the markup is applied according to the terms of this solicitation and resulting award.

You may stipulate different discounts off on specific brands or lines of goods if you desire.

PRICING FORMAT (EXCEL SPREADSHEETS 1 and 2)

DO NOT PROPOSE "PRICE TO BE DETERMINED" or "ON REQUEST". This method is not lawful to award by TIPS.

Pricing Sheet 1 excel sheet

There are three (3) sections in the Excel sheet #1, Section A, B, and C provided in the solicitation documents, please complete all that are applicable to your proposal. The discount off catalog price is the preferred method and please propose that method in addition to any other method you desire to cover future item or service availability.

Example: IF you are providing a line item pricing sheet AND a discount off the rest of your catalog, be sure to provide both the line item prices on the list of items proposed and a minimum discount off the rest of your catalog. If different sections of your catalog have different minimum discounts, please note accordingly.

Pricing Sheet 2 excel sheet

List any other services, maintenance agreements, mileage fees, maximum travel costs, etc. with line item pricing for year One and maximum percentage increase in pricing for years Two and Three of the awarded contract AND/OR discount off Catalog price as defined above if services are routinely listed in your catalog and priced therein.

Vendor may provide additional pricing in another format.

ALL PRICING SHALL BE FIRM AND CALCULABLE AT THE TIME OF SALE DURING THE LIFE OF THE CONTRACT AND MUST CONFORM AND COMPLY WITH THE VENDOR'S PROPOSED PRICING MODEL IN RESPONSE TO THE ORIGINAL SOLICITATION. DO NOT PROPOSE "PRICE TO BE DETERMINED". If you have question on this process , call TIPS for clarification.

Example: Proposed catalog, web or store price for an item is \$10.00 each and your proposed minimum discount is 5%, then the price is firm and calculable as \$9.50.

Please provide any explanatory information on your pricing proposal you believe is necessary to fully inform TIPS of your intent.

Service Incidental to the Sale of Goods

Many times, the sale of goods may be accompanied by the installation or set up of said goods. Proposers may submit pricing for the services in the Pricing Sheet 2 spreadsheet or in an attachment.

Any and All SERVICES may be proposed, but must be priced either as a line item or as a discount off the published Catalog price for said services. You may provide a catalog of services or a link to the available services or you may create a TIPS-specific Catalog list of services with applicable pricing. Please specify or illustrate your chosen method.

If LINE ITEM GOODS pricing, and during the life of the award, prices may be increased only commensurate, dollar for dollar as your cost for the item increases. To increase the price of a line item prices good, vendor must submit proof from the manufacturer or distributor that the pricing has increased and by how much.

NOTE: FAILURE TO PROPOSE SERVICES SHALL EXCLUDE THEM FROM YOUR OFFERING THROUGH THIS AWARD SO, PLEASE INCLUDE THEM IS SOME CALCULABLE WAY. YOU MAY PROVIDE A PERCENTAGE DISCOUNT OFF POSTED PRICES OR CATALOG PRICES FOR THE LOCATION OF THE STORE OR IN SOME SPECIFIC MANNER THAT FITS YOU BUSINESS MODEL.

When using line item pricing, vendor should provide on pricing template 2 a maximum price increase percentage for annually for renewal years. Complete all excel pricing forms.

PROPOSAL SCORING AND EVALUATION

A qualified evaluation committee will evaluate and score all proposals. Recommendations for award will be made to the Region 8 Education Service Center Board of Directors. Awards will be granted or denied at the monthly stated meeting of the Region 8 ESC Board of Directors. TIPS will base a recommendation for award on several factors mandated by the Texas Education Code section 44.031. The factors which will be considered and weighted points in each area as follows (100 total points): 30

TIPS shall use a final overall scoring system to include consideration for competitive pricing, best value price and cost evaluation. TIPS reserves the right to assign any number of point awards or penalties it considers warranted if a offeror stipulates exceptions, exclusions, or limitations of liabilities. Strong consideration will be given to the best value price as it relates to the products and services. However, price is ultimately only one of the factors taken into consideration in the evaluation and award. TIPS shall reserve the right to reject any or all proposals or any part of any proposal.

The following evaluation criteria are mandated for consideration by Texas Education Code § 44.031 (b).

- 1. Purchase Price: (32) point weight. Per prices quoted as related to information within the request for proposals and the discount off MSRP or other published list pricing or stated prices of goods.**

2. The reputation of the vendor and of the vendor's goods or services; (1) point weight. References and TIPS staff knowledge and any other available information known to TIPS may be used to score this criterion.

3. The quality of the vendor's goods or services; (30) point weight. References and TIPS staff knowledge and any other available information known or available through the RFP or otherwise to TIPS may be used to score this criterion.

4. The total long-term cost to TIPS and its members to acquire the vendor's goods or services; (1) point weight. Same as 1 above as there is no objective long term cost on this type of award.

5. Extent to which the Goods or Services meet the Needs: (31) point weight. TIPS evaluators will determine if the proposal provides value to TIPS members and if the goods and/or services offered by the proposer meets the needs outlined in the solicitation.

6. Vendor's Past Relationship: (5) point weight –Only experience within the past 5 years will be evaluated unless otherwise specified. No past relationship is 2.5 points and a good relationship is 2.6 to 5 points and a poor relationship is 0 to 2.4 points

7. Impact on the Ability of the District to Comply with Laws and Rules Relating to Historically Underutilized Businesses: (0) point weight – There are no Texas laws that apply to this procurement but since federal funds are anticipated to be utilized during the life of this contract, the proposer should agree to abide by the federal regulations in the forms contained in this SOLICITATION document related to underutilized businesses in its subcontracting practices. This factor has been considered and due to the foregoing, no points will be assigned. NOTE: Failure to agree to comply with the federal regulations in the forms herein shall make use of federal funds to purchase the goods or services proposed unallowable.

8. Residency: for a contract for goods and services, ***other than goods and services related to telecommunications and information services, building construction and maintenance, or instructional materials***, whether the vendor or the vendor's ultimate parent company or majority owner:

(A) has its principal place of business in this state; or

(B) employs at least 500 persons in this state; and

(0) point weight- federal funds may be utilized by ESC Region 8 or TIPS member entities during the life of this contract, and residency is a prohibited criterion under federal regulation, it has been considered and assigned a weight of 0 points.

PROPOSERS FALLING BELOW AN 80-point THRESHOLD WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR AN AWARD.

About TIPS

TIPS agreements are available for use by all schools, colleges, universities, cities, counties and other government entities in all fifty states if permitted by the jurisdictions of the governmental entities.

It is the purpose of this SOLICITATION to establish awarded vendor agreements to satisfy the procurement needs of participating member entities in this particular commodity category. These awarded agreements will enable member entities to purchase on an “as needed” basis from competitively awarded agreements with high performance vendors. Proposers are requested to submit a proposal for offering their line of available products that are commonly purchased by government agencies, cities, counties and educational entities.

- Awards will be made to the successful proposer(s) for the products and/or services. (Unless proposer has submitted inappropriate items for the commodity category. Those items will not be awarded. Example: a software company may not propose to perform construction work)
- TIPS reserves the right to award multiple vendors for each solicitation.
- This proposal is requested for the benefit of the current list of members and other new members as they execute TIPS membership Agreements in the future. Member List: <http://www.tips-usa.com/assets/documents/docs/membership.pdf>
- TIPS reserves the right to extend the proposal deadline for any reason.
- TIPS reserves the right to make changes to this Solicitation by way of one or more posted addenda.

Benefits of TIPS

- Provide government entities opportunities for greater efficiency and economy in acquiring goods and services through competitively procured vendor agreements.
- Provide comprehensive purchasing practices according the Laws of the State of Texas and Federal Regulation 2 CFR part 200, when appropriate, and is designed to result in competitive agreements that meet a wide variety of needs.
- Provide competitively priced purchasing options for multiple government entities that yields economic benefits usually unobtainable by the individual entity.
- Provide quick and efficient delivery of goods and services by entering into pricing agreements with “high performance” vendors.
- Equalized purchasing power for smaller entities.
- Maintain credibility and confidence in business procedures by maintaining free, full and open competition for purchases and by complying with purchasing laws and ethical business practices.
- Provide document retention for competitive procurement process for all TIPS Awarded Agreements.

Customer Service

- TIPS staff is available to members for assistance in viewing/contacting awarded vendors for categories to make purchases and agreement decisions.
- TIPS provides a way for government entities to avoid the time and expense of seeking competition for purchases on an agency-by-agency basis.
- TIPS enables vendors to become more efficient and competitive by reducing the number of proposals that require responses to be made to individual entities.

Purchasing Procedures

- Agreements are established through free, full and open competition as described by the laws of the State of Texas and are available for piggy-back by other government entities anywhere in the United States, subject to each entities' jurisdictional law and regulation. Purchase orders or equivalent are issued by participating governmental entities directly to the Vendor or vendor assigned dealer. Purchase orders or equivalent are usually sent to the TIPS office where they are reviewed by the TIPS staff and forwarded to the Vendor within one working day. In some instances, the entity may send the purchase orders or equivalent directly to the vendor and report the purchase to TIPS.
- [NOTE: It is always the vendor's responsibility under the TIPS agreement to report all sales under the agreement to TIPS.](#)
- Vendors deliver goods/services directly to the participating member agency and then invoice the participating member agency. The Vendor receives payment directly from the participating member agency.

Notice of Confidentiality of Proposed Information

The proposal submitted and all information therein is available to TIPS members. Also, according to the Texas Public Information Act, any documents or information held by TIPS "may" be public information. In the documents for the proposer to complete is a declaration form entitled "CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT REQUESTS OF EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER REGION 8 AND TIPS IS GOVERNED BY TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, CHAPTER 552" that must be completed by the proposer that designates specified pages as confidential or waives confidentiality of the entire proposal.

Proposal Instructions

1. Electronically sealed proposals are the preferred and most accurate method and is highly encouraged through our online procurement software, ION Wave.
2. Proposals may be amended by the proposer on the electronic site at any time prior to the due date and time. ION wave permits you to withdraw and resubmit your proposal.
3. If an addendum is posted, you are required to login to the ION Wave bidding software and address the addendum. No addendum will be issued within five calendar days of the opening unless it is to extend the opening or address a non-substantive issue. Legal

holidays not counted as calendar days are New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas.

4. Proposals may be submitted on any or all sections, related to the category, unless stated otherwise. TIPS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to accept any proposal(s) deemed advantageous to the TIPS members and to waive any informality in the proposal process.
5. Deviations to any Terms, Conditions and/or Specifications shall be clearly noted in writing by the contractor and shall be included with the proposal. There are attributes that you must respond to in order to submit a proposal that address deviations.
6. Withdrawal of proposals will not be allowed for a period of 90 days following the opening unless approved by TIPS.
7. Addenda, if required, will be issued by TIPS by email to the proposer's designated contact to all those vendors known to have reviewed the SOLICITATION documents through our electronic bidding software, ION Wave.

PROPOSAL FORMAT - PROPOSERS PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DETAILS LISTED.

TIPS reserves the right to waive any informality and/or reject any or all proposals.

All responses should be direct, concise, complete, and unambiguous. With regard to those items that cannot be answered in the affirmative, clearly explain the precise portion to which you disagree and why you disagree. Proposers must propose pricing that is calculable based on the prices presented or discounts proposed as they relate to a published price of the goods or services. Published prices are prices that are provided by a catalog, website, shelf, price list accessible to TIPS and its members at any time during the term of an awarded agreement with the vendor or specifically proposed. Other methods of publishing prices will be considered if proposed but must be calculable.

Felony Conviction Notice (Required in Texas) -Notification of Criminal History "A person or business entity that enters into an agreement with a school district must give advance notice to the district if the person or an owner or operator of the business entity has been convicted of a felony. The notice must include a general description of the conduct resulting in the conviction of a felony. A school district may terminate an agreement with a person or business entity if the district determines that the person or business entity failed to give notice as required or misrepresented the conduct resulting in the conviction. The district must compensate the person or business entity for services performed before the termination of the agreement." This notice is not required of a publicly held corporation. Texas Education Code § 44.034. See FELONY CONVICTION NOTICE document on the "Attachments" tab. Felony conviction notice document must be uploaded to the "Response Attachments" FELONY CONVICTION NOTICE section.

References

The proposal response should contain a minimum of Three (3) references of customers you have served that would be considered eligible for membership in TIPS (i.e. K-12 School Districts,

College/Universities, and/or City/County Government Entities, Water or Fire Districts, etc.). In addition to the name of the entity, a contact name, email and phone number shall be included. The references document must be downloaded from the “Attachments” section, completed and uploaded to the “Response Attachments” REFERENCES section.

Resellers/Dealers

Vendors with Resellers/Dealers must provide the Resellers/Dealers document from the “Attachments” section, complete and uploaded to the “Response Attachments” RESELLERS/DEALERS section.

Vendor Certifications

Vendor certifications should include applicable D/M/WBE, HUB and manufacturer certifications for sales and service (if applicable). Certificates must be scanned and uploaded to the “Response Attachments” D/M/WBE, HUB and/or ALL OTHER CERTIFICATES section. Whether or not you are a D/M/WBE, HUB or similar business will have no bearing on the evaluation score, but provides our members the information if it is part of their entities’ policies.

There is a form that relates to all vendors that is required by Federal Regulation when federal funds are expended by a member. Vendors should complete all requested forms agreeing to comply with regulations.

Vendor Agreement

Vendor Agreement must be downloaded from the “Attachments” section, completed and uploaded to the “Response Attachments” VENDOR AGREEMENT section. If proposer has deviations to the agreement language to negotiate with TIPS, there are attributes in the electronic process that address this possibility and you may insert your deviations there.

Agreement Signature Form

Agreement Signature Form must be downloaded from the “Attachments” section, completed, signed, scanned and uploaded to the “Response Attachments” AGREEMENT SIGNATURE FORM section. If proposer has deviations to the agreement language to negotiate with TIPS, the agreement signature page may be submitted unsigned until all terms and conditions are agreed.

Warranty (If applicable)

Warranty documentation should be scanned and uploaded to the “Response Attachments” WARRANTY section.

Protest Procedure

If a contractor/proposer (contractor) desires to protest a process or decision by TIPS, the contractor must follow the following process:

[http://www.tips-usa.com/assets/documents/docs/letters/Protest Procedures for Vendor.pdf](http://www.tips-usa.com/assets/documents/docs/letters/Protest_Procedures_for_Vendor.pdf)

Supplementary Catalogs and Information (If applicable)

Supplementary Catalogs and Information documentation should be scanned and uploaded to the "Response Attachments" SUPPLEMENTARY section. You may provide a link to catalogs or pricing that is published for all customers to see when shopping for your goods or services.

Links to catalog pricing must be kept current during the term of the awarded agreement. It is the intent of TIPS to award a manufacturer's complete line of products, when possible.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SOLICITATION AND THE USE OF AWARDED AGREEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Depending on different entities' and jurisdictions' laws and regulations, members may be prohibited from participating in one or more of the TIPS agreements. TIPS has no control over those legal restrictions and does not warrant that a member entity will be able to utilize a TIPS awarded agreement.

Terms and Conditions

1. **Exclusivity-** Any award under this solicitation is not exclusive and TIPS reserves the right to multi award or not award. TIPS reserves the right to solicit same or similar categories again for additional awards during the life of an existing agreement with one or more awarded vendors of another solicitation, if TIPS decides it is in the best interest of our members.
2. **Confidentiality of Proposal** - If you believe part of your proposal is confidential and not subject to sunshine laws such as the Public Information Act, there is a form to complete to make such a declaration. Read it carefully.
3. **Best and Final Offer** – There will be NO best and final offer, your proposal will be your final offer for solicitation competition purposes. Vendor may lower prices at any time during agreement period. See pricing section.
4. **Non-Responsive Proposals:** All proposals will be reviewed for responsiveness to the material requirements of the solicitation. A proposal that is not materially responsive shall not be eligible for further consideration for award of the agreement. There may be required specifications for this proposal and desired and other specifications. IF YOUR PROPOSAL FAILS TO MEET ANY OF THE DESIGNATED **REQUIRED** SPECIFICATIONS, YOUR PROPOSAL SHALL BE DEEMED NON-RESPONSIVE AND WILL NOT BE EVALUATED FURTHER OR CONSIDERED FOR AWARD.
5. **Deviations and Exceptions:** Deviations or exceptions stipulated as non-negotiable in the response by the proposer may result in disqualification if they are not acceptable to TIPS.
6. **Equal Pricing** – Pricing proposed shall be provided to any TIPS member and regardless of the quantity of product or service purchased from the awarded vendor. Pricing may

always be lowered by the vendor if circumstances permit to provide better value to TIPS members and for the vendor to be more competitive in that particular circumstance of sales opportunity. If prices are lowered in a specific circumstance, the same lowered pricing must be offered to all TIPS members if the quantities, timing and all other circumstances are identical.

7. **Estimated Quantities:** Because TIPS cannot accurately anticipate which members will utilize the awarded agreements due to the thousands of members and the different government entity types, TIPS makes no guarantee or commitment of any kind concerning quantities or usage of agreements resulting from this solicitation. This information, if provided, is provided solely as an aid to vendors in preparing proposals only. The successful Vendor(s) discount and pricing schedule shall apply regardless of the total cumulative volume of business under the agreement.
8. **Conditions of Agreement** - The terms and conditions of this solicitation shall control in the order that best serves the TIPS members' needs and deciding the controlling order is at the sole discretion of TIPS. The terms and conditions of this solicitation shall be incorporated by reference in a resulting agreement unless expressly agreed otherwise by the parties in writing.
9. **Name brands** – If name brands are required to be priced but other products of equal or similar type and quality may also be represented in the pricing and will be considered. TIPS want pricing either in a fixed price or a discount off published or available to TIPS Members catalog price or both if applicable to your proposal. A “catalog” is defined above and includes pricing of goods and /or services.
10. **Evaluation** – TIPS will evaluate the best value by rating the proposals submitted by the vendors. The point score received will be the weighted score which will be used to determine awarded vendors. See Evaluation criteria sheet with applicable point weights in this document. If applicable, extensions of unit prices shown will be subject to verification by the district. In case of variation between the unit price and the extension, the unit price will be considered to be the proposal.
11. **LIMITATION OF LIABILITY – Waiver:** BY SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL, OFFERER EXPRESSLY AGREES TO WAIVE ANY CLAIM IT HAS OR MAY HAVE AGAINST BOTH THE INTERLOCAL PURCHASING SYSTEM REGION 8 EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER, ITS DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, ITS TRUSTEES, OR AGENTS ARISING OUT OF OR IN CONNECTION WITH (1) THE ADMINISTRATION, EVALUATION, RECOMMENDATION OF ANY PROPOSAL; (2) ANY REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE SOLICITATION, PROPOSAL PACKAGE, OR RELATED DOCUMENTS; (3) THE REJECTION OF ANY PROPOSAL OR ANY PART OF ANY PROPOSAL; AND/OR (4) THE AWARD OF AN AGREEMENT, IF ANY. NEITHER REGION 8 ESC NOR TIPS SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE OR LIABLE FOR ANY COSTS INCURRED BY PROPOSERS OR THE SELECTED CONTRACTOR IN CONNECTION WITH RESPONDING TO THE SOLICITATION, PREPARING FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS, PREPARING AND SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL, ENTERING OR NEGOTIATING THE TERMS OF AN AGREEMENT, OR ANY OTHER EXPENSES

INCURRED BY A PROPOSER. THE PROPOSER OR SELECTED CONTRACTOR IS WHOLLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY SUCH COSTS AND EXPENSES AND SHALL NOT BE REIMBURSED IN ANY MANNER BY REGION 8 ESC OR TIPS.

12. RESERVATION OF RIGHTS - TIPS expressly reserves the right to:

- a) Reject or cancel any or all proposals;
- b) Waive any defect, irregularity or informality in any proposal or SOLICITATION procedure provided the waiver is equally applied to all Offerors and an Offeror is not prejudiced by the waiver as compared to other Offerors;
- c) Waive as an informality, minor deviations from specifications for goods or services at a lower price than other proposals meeting all aspects of the specifications if it is determined that total cost is lower and the overall function is not impaired;
- d) Reissue a SOLICITATION;
- e) Consider and accept an alternate proposal as provided herein when most advantageous to TIPS and its members;
- f) TIPS has the right to terminate the agreement for cause or no cause for convenience with a thirty-day written notice, unless otherwise agreed in writing in an executed agreement between the parties;
- g) This is not an exclusive award and no guaranteed volumes of purchases are guaranteed. TIPS and its members reserves the right to procure any items or services by other means at the sole discretion of TIPS or its members.