



## **ELECTRONIC BID SOLICITATION**

Reprinted with permission from The Military Engineer, December 1998

By Randall L. Lierly

The traditional bid solicitation process is near dead. Paper is being replaced by electronics. The traditional process is fast becoming anachronistic. Soon, there will be no more sorting through stacks of paperwork, depending on mailing systems, waiting for contractors' responses, manually preparing bidders' lists and writing the solicitations package; followed then by printing and reproducing drawings, specifications and contracting forms; followed then by packaging, labeling and mailing the materials; and then finally, followed by answering countless calls from contractors, many of whom ask the same questions.

The federal government, the largest contracting agency in the U.S., is moving away from paper - the reproduction and distribution of hardcopy bid packages for construction projects and associated costs - toward a digital based process known as Electronic Bid Solicitation, or EBS for short. It promises efficient use of resources, a guarantee of substantial time savings, and the reduction of storage space for archived contract bid documents.

The EBS way of doing business uses electronic media such as diskettes, CD-ROM (for now), and the Internet. Bid packages can be distributed via e-mail, on CD-ROM or by posting on a Web site. Contracting puts the solicitation together with fewer clauses (the Web page contains all the common clauses and full text versions). "Viewer/Reader" programs are packaged with the bid documents; thus you, the prospective bidder, don't have to purchase proprietary software to access the files. Equally, your computer performs the majority of the most tedious tasks. There is immediate access to information, the bidder's list is generated automatically, and there are no printing and mailing costs. (The Air Force can now provide a complete set of drawing and specifications electronically to subcontractors whom, in turn can see the drawing they want). Furthermore, questions, answers, and amendments to documentation are on the Web as well for immediate access by registered bidders.

The Tri-Service CADD/GIS Technology Center, Vicksburg, MS, has investigated available technology and developed a prototype showing how contract documents can be delivered electronically on CD-ROM to prospective bidders. The Center also documented lessons-learned about EBS, developed procedures and guidelines for EBS, promoted project case studies and provided hands-on training for each of the military services. Among the Center's initial case studies are the: dormitory complex at Edwards AFB, CA. under the auspices of the Army Corps of Engineers Fort Worth District; enlisted barracks complex at Ft. Carson, CO under the auspices of the Corps Omaha District; and the installation of water meters at the point Loma complex in San Diego under the auspices of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest Division.

In the case of the Air Force, most of its implementation of EBS is dependent on our design/construction agents, the Corps of Engineers' district offices. Many of the district offices have implemented, or are now implementing, EBS on Air Force projects. The Air Force's most aggressive EBS initiatives are in the Military Family Housing Program of the Air Force Center

## GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS PRACTICES

for Environmental Excellence (AFCEE) The Housing Division executes more than 50 percent of the Air Force's total military family housing construction. Acting as it's own design/construction agent, the housing division staff concluded they could achieve significant dollar savings by converting to electronic solicitations, the housing division has issued over 10 electronic bid solicitations and amendments, saving an average of \$7,000 per solicitation.

Solicitation Number	Title	Location	Media	Issue Date	Bid/Due Date
<a href="#">DACA45.00.R.0007</a>	MOD-INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS, PH 500776D REPAIR BRACE BEAMS BLDG08 3A 01 & 04/REPLACE RAILDOCK YARD L	Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, Iowa		3/27/00	4/27/00
<a href="#">DACA45.00.R.0002</a>	EA Design Build IDIQ Amendment 1, 2	Colorado, Vicinity of Cheyenne, WY/2 Rapid City, SD		3/17/00	5/3/00
<a href="#">DACA41.00.R.0004</a>	PHYSICAL FITNESS CENTER, OLEN 973007 Amendment 1, 2	SCHRIEBER AFB, COLORADO		3/5/00	4/25/00
<a href="#">DACA45.00.R.0006</a>	FY2000 Fire/Comb/Rescue Station	Peterson AFB, Colorado		4/25/00	5/25/00
<a href="#">DACA45.99.R.0013</a>	Remediation of Various Hazardous Waste Sites Nationwide Amendment 1	Nationwide - Omaha District		3/28/00	5/12/00

[Advertised Solicitations](#) [Bid Award Results](#) [Contracting Division Info](#) [Solicitation Printing](#) [Software](#) [FAQ](#) [Links](#) [TSS Home](#)

POCs for this page:  
Mark Shifren, CEVWFO-ED-DI  
Telephone: (402) 221-4454  
Omaha, Nebraska

EBS is quickly becoming the standard way of doing business within the Air Force. For example, Air Force material Command set a goal of having 100 percent of its Fiscal year 1999 construction program solicited via the Internet. Other Air Force major commands are at various stages of implementing EBS.

To support the Air Force's implementation efforts, AFCEE's Design and Construction (DC) Directorate is developing specific guidance to help major commands and installations initiate and streamline EBS procedures. The Directorate also plans establishing an Air Force EBS Web page to provide additional information such as Air Force lessons-learned, case studies, and training opportunities, as well as to link to related Internet sites.

EBS is quickly proving to be the simplest application of new technology to the military construction process. In an effort to create a seamless transition from paper to paperless contracting, we are focusing on making it easier and less costly for potential contractors to do business with the federal government. We believe the EBS effort will benefit the Air Force, the federal government as a whole, and, ultimately, the American taxpayer.

---

*Randall L. Lierly is an architect in the Design and Construction Division of the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence.*