PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
Between
The U.S. Small Business Administration
And
The U.S. Department of Agriculture

Sections 7(j) and 8(a) of the Small Business Act (the Act) (15 U.S.C. §§ 636 (j) and 637(a)) authorize the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to establish a business development program, which is known as the 8(a) Business Development (BD) Program. The 8(a) BD program promotes the development of small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals so that such concerns can compete in the mainstream of the American economy. (15 U.S.C. § 631(f)(2)). Small business development is accomplished by providing various forms of management, technical, financial and procurement assistance. Additionally, pursuant to section 8(a) of the Act, SBA is authorized to enter into all types of contracts with other Federal agencies and to subcontract the performance of these contracts to qualified Participants in the 8(a) BD Program.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Partnership Agreement (PA) between SBA and The U.S. Department of Agriculture is to delegate SBA's contract execution functions to The U.S. Department of Agriculture per the requirements of 13 C.F.R. § 124.501. The PA sets forth the delegation of authority and establishes the basic procedures for expediting the award of 8(a) contract requirements. This PA replaces all terms and conditions of any previously executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or PA with The U.S. Department of Agriculture or subordinate agencies on the issue of expediting the award of requirements pursuant to Section 8(a) of the Act.

Failure to sign this PA will require The U.S. Department of Agriculture to utilize the prescribed processes to contract with the SBA as stated in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 19.8.

II. OBJECTIVES

A. To delineate the responsibilities as they relate to the oversight, monitoring and compliance with procurement laws and regulations governing 8(a) contracts between SBA and The U.S. Department of Agriculture;
B. To establish the procedures for offer and acceptance between SBA and The U.S. Department of Agriculture;
C. To establish that SBA will respond to an offering letter within five (5) working days if the contract is valued at more than the simplified acquisition threshold and within two days of receipt if the contract is valued at or below the simplified acquisition thresholds. See 13 C.F.R. § 124.503(a)(3);

D. To emphasize that although SBA delegates the authority to sign contracts on its behalf, it remains the prime contractor on all 8(a) contracts awards, modifications, options and purchase orders, and must receive copies of all contracts and subsequent modifications;
E. To eliminate SBA's review of contracts and purchase orders executed under the authority of this PA; and
F. To establish uniform policies and procedures regarding application of contracts and purchase orders to the 8(a) contracting

III. SCOPE

The PA provides for the award of contracts, modifications, options and purchase orders under the provisions of Section 8(a) of the Act as implemented by the FAR Subpart 19.8 and SBA's 8(a) BD program regulations found at 13 C.F.R. §124, (Subpart A).

The PA encompasses all competitive and non-competitive acquisitions of requirements offered by The U.S. Department of Agriculture contracting offices and accepted by SBA for the 8(a) BD program.

The PA applies to all SBA offices and all The U.S. Department of Agriculture contracting offices, as defined in FAR § 2.101 and deemed appropriate by the head of the agency, as defined in FAR § 2.101, for The U.S. Department of Agriculture.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. SBA's Responsibilities.

SBA

1. delegates to The U.S. Department of Agriculture for re-delegation to all warranted The U.S. Department of Agriculture contracting officers, its authority under section 8(a)(1)(A) of the Act to enter into 8(a) prime contracts, and its authority under section 8(a)(1)(B) of the Act to arrange for the performance of such procurement contracts by eligible 8(a) Participants. In accordance with 13 C.F.R. §124.501(a), SBA delegates its 8(a) contract execution function. SBA remains the prime contractor on all 8(a) contracts and the 8(a) Participant remains the SBA's subcontractor;

2. will implement its responsibilities under this PA through uniform procedures for use by all SBA offices;

3. will provide training for The U.S. Department of Agriculture contracting officers and small business specialists, on the SBA's 8(a) BD program and various aspects of the PA

4. shall review The U.S. Department of Agriculture' offering letters, issue acceptance or rejection letters, and make eligibility determinations for award;

(a) Sole Source Procurements.

i. SBA will issue either an acceptance letter or rejection letter within five (5) working days of receipt of an offering letter, unless the District Office requests and the procuring activity agrees to an extension of time.
ii. Absent a notification of rejection within five (5) working days of receipt of the offer, acceptance may be assumed on the sixth (6th) working day unless an extension has been requested and accepted.
iii. Acceptance shall include a size verification and determination with respect to all elements of eligibility (i.e., determinations of adverse impact, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code appropriateness and program eligibility). See citations found at 13 C.F.R. §124.504(c);

(b) Competitive Acquisitions.

i. SBA will issue an acceptance letter or rejection letter within five (5) working days of receipt of an offering letter, unless the District Office requests and the procuring activity agree to an extension of time.
ii. Where SBA does not respond with a notification of rejection within five (5) working days of receipt of the offer, the procuring activity may seek SBA's acceptance through the Associate Administrator, Office of Business Development (AA/BD). If the procuring activity does not receive a reply from the AA/BD within five (5) working days of the AA/BD's receipt of the offer, the procuring activity may assume acceptance on the sixth (6th) working day.
iii. Within five (5) working days after a request from the contracting officer, SBA shall issue an eligibility determination for the apparent successful offer, as prescribed by SBA's regulations at 13 C.F.R. §124.507(b).

(c) Acquisitions Valued at or Below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold.

i. No offering or acceptance letter is required for requirements valued at or below the simplified acquisition threshold, in accordance with the delegation of authority.

ii. SBA will review the program eligibility of the 8(a) Participant within two (2) working days after a request from the contracting officer.

iii. Absent a notification that the selected 8(a) Participant is ineligible for the award within two (2) working days, the procuring agency may assume the 8(a) Participant is eligible and proceed with award, as prescribed by SBA's regulations at 13 C.F.R. 124.503(a)(4)(i).

iv. The procuring agency must notify SBA of these 8(a) awards under this authority. See 13 C.F.R. § 124.503(a)(4)(ii).

5. shall review and approve all proposed joint venture agreements involving 8(a) Participants before 8(a) contract award;

6. may provide 8(a) Participants with contract negotiation assistance or direct them to appropriate resources where they can obtain technical assistance in contract negotiations when requested by either the 8(a) Participant or The U.S. Department of Agriculture contracting officer;

7. shall retain its appeal authority in accordance with FAR § 19.810;

8. shall retain the right to perform on-site agency reviews to ensure contract compliance;

9. may identify a requirement for an 8(a) Participant for a possible award.. SBA will submit capability statements to the appropriate procuring activities for the purpose of matching requirements consistent with the 8(a) Participant's capability;

10. shall retain the responsibility for ensuring that 8(a) Participants comply with all applicable provisions relating to continuing eligibility for 8(a) BD Program participation per 13 C.F.R. § 124.112.

11. shall select an appropriate 8(a) Participant when The U.S. Department of Agriculture submits an open offering letter for a sole source requirement; and

B. Responsibilities of The U.S. Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture

1. shall receive and retain SBA's delegation of contract execution and review functions by reporting all 8(a) contract awards, modifications, options and purchase orders to SBA until such time as the agreement expires or is terminated;

2. shall adhere to all provisions of contractual assistance identified in 13 C.F.R..§§ 124.501 through 124.520; as well as the applicable provisions of FAR Subpart 19.8;

3. shall determine which requirements are suitable for offering to the 8(a) BD program in accordance with FAR, Subpart 19.8, and, where appropriate, identify in conjunction with the appropriate SBA servicing office, 8(a) Participants capable of performing these requirements;

4. shall retain responsibility for compliance with the limitations on subcontracting requirement and all applicable provisions of FAR § 52.219-14 and any The U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations;

5. shall include provisions in all contract awards, modifications, options and purchase orders awarded or issued under the 8(a) BD Program that require Program Participants to comply with the Subcontracting Limitations, and shall conduct and document an assessment at the time of contract award of the Participant's ability to comply with the Subcontracting Limitations.

6. shall provide a copy of any signed contract, as defined in FAR § 2.101, including modifications, options and purchase orders executed under this PA to the SBA servicing district office within 15 working days of the date of award;

7. shall inform contracting officers and other warranted officials and their equivalents who are awarding 8(a) contracts of their responsibilities concerning this agreement;

8. shall ensure that contracting officers and other warranted officials and their equivalents obtain training on their obligations under this PA and the subcontracting limitations of FAR § 52.219-14 and 13 C.F.R. §§ 124.510 and 125.6.

9. shall include monitoring and oversight provisions for all contract awards, modifications, options and purchase orders to ensure that all contracts comply with the performance requirements (Limitations on Subcontracting) of FAR § 52.219-14 and 13 C.F.R. §124.510 and § 125.6;

10. shall request an eligibility determination from SBA's district office responsible for servicing the selected 8(a) Participant when an 8(a) Participant has been identified on all acquisitions valued at or below the simplified acquisition threshold prior to issuance of the purchase order;

11. shall submit the offering letter for sole source requirements exceeding the simplified acquisition threshold to SBA's district office responsible for servicing the selected 8(a) Participant, when an 8(a) Participant has been identified. See FAR 19.804-2;

12. shall submit an open offering letter for sole source requirements to the SBA district office that services the geographical area where The U.S. Department of Agriculture' contracting activity is located, when The U.S. Department of Agriculture has not identified a specific 8(a) Participant for a requirement. See FAR 19.804-2;

13. shall submit the offering letter for competitive 8(a) requirements to the SBA district office that services the geographical area where The U.S. Department of Agriculture' contracting activity is located. Exceptions: the offering letters for construction work will be sent to the SBA district office located in the geographical area where the work will be performed, or, in the case of construction contracts to be performed overseas, the offering letter shall be submitted to SBA's Headquarters. See FAR 19.804-2;

14. shall request an eligibility determination prior to final award in all 8(a) competitive acquisitions;

15. shall ensure that all contracts awarded pursuant to this PA contain provisions that require:

    (a) SBA's approval of novation agreements submitted by the 8(a) Participant; and

    (b) advance notice to SBA (as the prime contractor) prior to issuance of a final notice terminating the contract in whole or in part;

16. shall ensure that all NAICS codes for all 8(a) contracts are applied in accordance with FAR § 19.102;

17. shall add language to every contract stating that, even though SBA may not be identified in section A of the contract, it is still the prime contractor on the contract;

18. shall provide all proposed 8(a) joint ventures to SBA for approval before 8(a) contract(s) award; and

19. cannot use contracts that have not been offered to and accepted by SBA into the 8(a) BD program as credit toward The U.S. Department of Agriculture' 8(a) negotiated goals.

20. A Contracting Officer shall notify SBA in writing of their request to release a requirement from the 8(a) BD Program. The written notification should be sent to the cognizant SBA district office serving the geographical area in which the procuring agency is located. The Contracting Officer shall include the reason(s) for the request, the procurement history of the requirement, the incumbent name, the assigned NAICS Code and the Statement of Work. The final decision rests with the AA/BD.

21. shall provide SBA with access to all non-classified information in contract files so that SBA can perform on-site agency reviews to ensure that procuring agencies are complying with the terms and conditions of this agreement.

V. CONTRACT EXECUTION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's contracting officer may make direct award of a contract to the 8(a) Participant, but only after the requirement has been offered to and accepted by SBA. Acquisitions valued at or below the simplified acquisition threshold, as defined in FAR § 2.101, and per 13 C.F.R. §124.503(a)(4)(ii), require no offer or acceptance letter; however, (a) a program eligibility determination of the selected 8(a) Participant from SBA is required; and (b) the procuring activity must notify SBA of all 8(a) awards made under this authority, per 13 C.F.R. §124.503(a)(4)(ii). Contract execution shall be on the appropriate form as specified in FAR or by The U.S. Department of Agriculture regulation. The "Issued by" block shall identify the awarding The U.S. Department of Agriculture' office. The SBA district office for the 8(a) Participant shall be identified in the award document. The 8(a) Participant's name and address shall be listed as the contractor. The U.S. Department of Agriculture' contracting activities are responsible for issuing procurement instrument identification numbers. SBA will not issue subcontract numbers.

VI. TERM

This PA will take effect as soon as SBA and The U.S. Department of Agriculture have signed it. It will remain in effect until September 30, 2012.

VII. AMENDMENT

This PA may be amended, in writing, at any time by mutual agreement of the parties.

VIII. TERMINATION

Either SBA or The U.S. Department of Agriculture may terminate this PA upon 30 calendar days advance written notice to the other party.

IX. CONDITIONS

A. Contracts that have not been offered to and accepted by SBA into the 8(a) BD program cannot be used for The U.S. Department of Agriculture' s 8(a) negotiated goals.

B. SBA reserves the right to suspend or rescind the authority of this PA with The U.S. Department of Agriculture for failure to submit copies to SBA of award and modification documents within 15 working days of award, failure to adequately monitor 8(a) contract compliance requirements, or if The U.S. Department of Agriculture otherwise fails to follow the terms of this PA.

C. SBA has the right to conduct periodic compliance on-site agency reviews of the files of all contracts awarded pursuant to Section 8(a) authority and this Agreement. The delegated authority may be rescinded when on-site agency review findings indicate a pattern failure to comply with 8(a) program regulations that govern award and administration of such contracts.

X. ADMINISTRATION

For The U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Quinton N. Robinson
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Room 209A
Washington, DC 20250
202-720-7117

For SBA:

Sheila D. Thomas
Director, Office of Program Review
Office of Business Development
409 3rd Street, SW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20416
(202) 205-6613
(202) 481-5567 (fax)

XI. ACCEPTANCE

Authorized by and on behalf of their respective agencies, the undersigned parties hereby accept the terms and conditions of this agreement.

For:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture

9/29/09

Pearlie S. Reed Date
Assistant Secretary for Administration

For:

SBA

9/30/09 Date

Joseph G. Jordan
Associate Administrator for
Government Contracting and
Business Development

9/30/09 Date

Mina A. Wales (A)
Director
Office of Strategic Alliances

Assoc. G. Counsel
25 Sep 09