



Guidance: Conducting School Food Authority (SFA) Pre-Bid Meetings for Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Request for Proposals (RFPs), and Vended Meals Vendor Request for Quotes (RFQs) and Invitation for Bids (IFBs)

Conducting a Pre-Bid Meeting

Pre-bid meetings provide an opportunity for SFAs to clarify solicitation details and allow potential bidders to better understand the scope of work to provide accurate and competitive bids. The date, time, and location for pre-bid meetings must be defined in solicitation documents. While pre-bid meetings are optional, they are highly recommended because they encourage full and open competition by ensuring that all potential bidders have access to information and a clear understanding of requirements.

The following are guidelines for SFAs that hold a pre-bid meeting when procuring a FSMC or Vended Meals Vendor.

Take attendance – If pre-bid meeting attendance is mandatory for potential bidders to submit a bid or proposal, then it is a requirement to take attendance. The attendance list should include the FSMC or vendor representative name, affiliated FSMC or vendor organization name, and contact information for all representatives and potential bidders in attendance. It is recommended to track attendance for optional pre-bid meetings, virtual or in-person.

Introduction – Begin pre-bid meetings at the specified date, time, and location as outlined in your solicitation document by providing an overview of the purpose for the meeting. Review the meeting agenda along with the timeline of important dates for the procurement process. During the introduction, outline instructions for how and when post-meeting questions must be submitted along with how and when they will be answered.

Review of documents and Q&A – It is important to ensure that all documents must be made available to all interested bidders. This is your opportunity to review key sections of your solicitation and allow bidders to ask questions and seek clarification.

Facility tour – It is important for potential vendors to have an opportunity to view the physical space they will be managing. A facility tour allows them to better understand your school's operational needs and equipment capabilities.

Follow up questions and answers – After the pre-bid meeting, vendors will oftentimes reach out with questions. Record all questions asked by bidders and make all questions and answers available to all interested parties. This is required to ensure fairness and transparency to all potential bidders. They should receive the same information at the same time with ample time and opportunity to respond. By doing this, you also reduce the risk of disputes and potential bid protests.