

private. The contracting committee will open each bona fide bid which has been received prior to the deadline, and review it for any irregularities, errors, or exceptions. It must be verified that any addendum to the specification has been acknowledged by each bidder. The adequacy of bid bonds or certified checks must also be verified.

(g) *Conditions affecting acceptability of bids.* The borrower must take the following specified action if any of the following exist:

(1) *Fewer than three bona fide bids received.* If fewer than three bona fide bids are received for the contract project, the borrower must determine that all reasonable measures have been taken to assure competition prior to awarding the contract. This determination must be documented and such documentation submitted to RUS where required by subpart A of this part. The borrower may, however, elect to reject all bids, make changes in the specification or the qualified bidders list or both and invite new bids.

(2) *Significant error or ambiguity in the specification.* If a significant error or ambiguity in the specification is found which could result in the bidders having varying interpretations of the requirements of the bid, the borrower must either issue an addendum to each prospective bidder correcting the error or ambiguity before bids are received, or reject all bids and correct the specification. If a significant error or ambiguity in the specification is discovered after the bids are opened, the borrower must reject all bids, correct the specification and invite new bids.

(h) *Negotiations.* The contracting committee may elect not to hold any negotiations and recommend award of the contract. Otherwise, the contracting committee must give at least each of the three apparent lowest evaluated bidders an equal opportunity to participate in negotiations for the purpose of resolving questions regarding the specification and contract terms and to arrive at a final price. Neither prices of other bids nor relative ranking of any bidder are to be revealed under any circumstances. Such discussions may be held by telephone or similar means provided at least each of the three apparent lowest evaluated bid-

ders have an equal opportunity to participate. Upon completion of the negotiations, the contracting committee will determine the bid that is in the borrower's best interest.

(i) *Award of the contract.* Upon completion of the bid evaluations, the contracting committee will promptly report all findings and recommendations to the borrower's board of directors. The board will either:

(1) Resolve to award the contract to the selected bidder; or

(2) Reject all bids.

(j) *Certifications by the contracting committee.* The chairperson of the contracting committee shall certify as follows: "The procedures for multiparty negotiation as described in 7 CFR 1726.203 were followed in awarding this contract." The certification executed by the chairperson of the contracting committee shall be submitted to RUS in writing where required by subpart A of this part.

§ 1726.204 Multiparty unit price quotations.

The borrower or its engineer must contact a sufficient number of suppliers or contractors to assure competition and so that at least three bids will be received. On the basis of written unit price quotations, the borrower will select the supplier or contractor based on the lowest evaluated cost.

§ 1726.205 Multiparty lump sum quotations.

The borrower or its engineer must contact a sufficient number of suppliers or contractors to assure competition and so that at least three bids will be received. On the basis of written lump sum quotations, the borrower will select the supplier or contractor based on the lowest evaluated cost.

§§ 1726.206–1726.249 [Reserved]

Subpart H—Modifications to RUS Standard Contract Forms

§ 1726.250 General.

RUS provides standard contract forms for procurement of materials, equipment, and construction, for contract amendments and subcontracts, and various related forms for use by