

Choosing by Advantages (CBA)

The CBA methodology was adopted by agency experts representing Acquisition Management (AQM) and Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) as a means of evaluating equipment offered for use on incidents by not only price, but also pre-identified equipment attributes. CBA was first implemented in 2007 for water handling equipment. Beginning with the 2008 solicitations, the Contract Equipment Task Team (CETT) developed and recommended attributes and advantage points for equipment scheduled for solicitation each year. The CETT was chartered under the direction of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Equipment Technology Committee (ETC), formerly known as the Fire Equipment Working Team (FEWT).

The methodology is a two step process:

STEP 1: Award the Incident Blanket Purchase Agreement (I-BPA) using a reasonable price/technically acceptable method. I-BPAs will be awarded to those vendors who offer a fair and reasonable price as determined by the Contracting Officer. In addition, the vendor must “pass” the following equipment and personnel requirements: Equipment meets the minimum specifications and quality standards Key personnel possess the minimum training qualifications Vendor has acceptable past performance.

STEP 2: Rank the awarded equipment on a dispatch priority list (DPL). All equipment on an awarded I-BPA will be ranked individually on the DPL according to the advantages the equipment has to offer. The vendor will provide their equipment information when submitting an offer in response to a solicitation. This information will be validated by the Contracting Officer, or their assistant(s), prior to awarding an I-BPA.

Each type of equipment has identified criteria that are important to the agency. Each criterion has a “relative importance” when compared to the other criteria for that equipment type, and has multiple attributes. A point value is assigned to each attribute of that criterion. The attribute point value multiplied by the criterion’s relative importance provides the advantage points for that equipment criterion. When points are assigned to all advantages of all equipment, they are added to obtain the total advantage points for the equipment. Each point total is divided by the price for that equipment, resulting in “Total Advantage per Dollar of Cost”. It may not be the cheapest price, it may not be the best equipment, but it will show the greatest advantage to the Government. Those pieces of equipment offering the greatest advantage in relation to price (highest total advantage per dollar) will be ranked highest on the DPL. As stated previously, for some equipment there were no advantage points identified, price was the only factor.

This method is based on the principle of “Choosing by Advantages” (CBA), a well-tested and widely used decision making process the Forest Service utilizes extensively, as do other government agencies and private industry. In concept, the process is simple and accurate: “Decisions must be based on the importance of advantages.”

Specific information on attributes is located within the applicable solicitation. Solicitation templates are available at the following website:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/business/incident/solicitations.php>