

PRINTING AND BINDING OF QUESTIONNAIRE BOOKLETS TO BE INCLUDED IN MAILING PACKAGES THAT WILL CONTAIN OTHER VARIOUS PRINTED PRODUCTS SUCH AS LETTERS, INSERTS, POSTCARDS, BUSINESS REPLY ENVELOPES, AND OUTGOING ENVELOPES.

Notice Type: Sources Sought

NAICS Code: 323 -- Printing and Related Support Activities

This is a Request for Information (RFI).

The synopsis provided is for informational and planning purposes only and should not be construed as a formal solicitation or as an obligation or commitment by the Government to reply to the information received, to later publish a solicitation, or to award a contract based on this information.

Purpose:

The U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) intends to gather information from vendors and organizations with experience in the production, packaging, and mailing of questionnaire booklets, letters, inserts, business reply envelopes, and outgoing envelopes. Responses are sought from interested and responsible vendors for the purpose of developing requirements for the future production of printed Census products.

The Government is considering various binding formats, including saddle-stitching and paste-on-fold requirements for the questionnaire booklets (referred to as simply questionnaires hereinafter) to achieve desired objectives to include, but not limited to:

1. Minimizing production cost
2. Increasing overall productivity
3. Ensuring continuous product availability
4. Utilizing requirements common to the production of questionnaire mailing packages
5. Maintaining certain requirements for product usability (see Minimum Mandatory Requirements stated below).

GPO seeks information in the form of clear and definitive written documentation describing the vendor's capabilities to meet minimum mandatory requirements (as specified below) and detailed suggestions for the most efficient production process. Response should address each of the specific requirements in sufficient detail to enable GPO to determine current market capabilities, including strengths and limitations.

Background:

The specifications from a previous GPO contract (RFP 920-S) provide details about the questionnaire mailing package requirements including binding descriptions of two questionnaires. The RFP 920-S can be accessed at: <https://www.gpo.gov/how-to-work-with-us/vendors/contract-pricing>. ***NOTE: The specifications in the 920-S provide historical data and are for informational purposes only. There is no guarantee that future Census requirements will be produced exactly as specified in the 920-S.***

All specified requirements (with exception of the minimum mandatory requirements identified in this RFI) are subject to evaluation of suggested revisions and possible adoption of changes that would help the Government meet stated objectives.

Efforts to maintain efficient quality production and mailing questionnaire packages are necessary to meet Census needs. The production of questionnaires and mailing packages will continue to be a statutory requirement with a mandatory production performance period and complete mailing date. Quantities will be estimated with final production totals anticipated to be within +/-25 percent of estimates.

Minimum Mandatory Requirements:

1. Each product must contain complete four-page signatures after trimming. Single leaves connected with a lip (i.e., binding stub) to left or right side of stitches/binding will not be allowed. NOTE: Page count for questionnaires may be 8, 12, 16, 36, or 44 pages.
2. Questionnaires must be produced via conventional offset in a continuous run and will require barcode serialization on all pages of the questionnaire.
3. For saddle-stitching, the contractor must stagger the physical location of the stitches on approximately 50% of every questionnaire version to reduce the bulk of the stitched area when stacked during processing of the returned questionnaires by the Census Bureau. Staggered binding must not overlap. Stitches must be at least 1" from the head and foot of product.
4. For paste-on-fold, a continuous bead of glue shall be applied on the 11" dimension and trim three sides. The glue shall hold all pages securely together for a period of up to 10 months from delivery. The glue shall be applied, with no gaps, along the bind edge and shall extend no more than 1/8" onto the inside sheets from the fold. A vertical measurement shall exist 3/16" from the binding on all pages. The contractor shall ensure that once the bind edge is trimmed off by 1/4" (successor operation), all pages properly separate, and there is no glue residue on the sheets. NOTE: Paste-on-fold operations must be performed inline on press and not as a separate function off press.
5. After printing and binding, fold from 9 x 11" to 9 x 5-1/2" (with page 1 facing out) for insertion into outgoing envelopes.

Response Requirements:

For this RFI, vendors that have the capability to meet the minimum mandatory requirements are invited to submit the following:

1. Complete details describing how they would address the mandatory requirements.
2. Identification of any 920-S binding requirements that they cannot meet or that are nonstandard for the industry and suggestions for alternate binding methods (with reference to cost differentials between what is in 920-S and what they're proposing).
3. Explanation of saddle-stitch versus paste-on-fold regarding: 1) schedule; 2) production equipment and capacity; and 3) cost.
4. Sample(s) of suggested binding process(es).

Based on vendors' capability to bind using saddle-stitching, paste-on-fold, or alternative binding process(es), vendors are asked to provide a narrative that includes responses to the following questions:

1. How will each different binding process affect the production schedule?
 - What are the production counts per hour/per machine for each binding method for an 8-hour workday?
 - What are the major determinants of the time each binding method takes?
2. What are the highest production volumes that can be yielded from the vendor's binding equipment? For each binding method, list the equipment that would be used, including model, and volumes.
3. Which binding method would be most economical to the Government. What is the overall percentage cost difference between the binding methods?
4. List any recommendations for alternative binding methods in lieu of saddle-stitching or paste-on-fold?

After demonstrating specifically how the minimum mandatory needs can be achieved, vendors are encouraged to further examine all the requirements within the previous contract specifications (RFP 920-S). Vendors are asked to identify any requirements that describe exceptions to their capability, or which are a deviation from standard industry practices and provide any suggestions that could yield cost savings or improvements through the Government's acceptance of an alternate production method or other change in the **non-mandatory** elements contained in the previous contract specifications.

Proposed alternatives should be supported by identifying the relative cost of producing the product as specified in comparison to the cost of producing the product using the suggested alternative.

If possible, vendors are asked to provide a sample of the suggested binding process like the products ordered in the previous contract specifications (RFP 920-S) for evaluation and testing by GPO Quality Control for Print Products (QCPP).

General marketing information or incomplete responses may not be considered. Reference to vendor websites where research could be conducted independently by the Government without explanation by the vendor is not considered to be a desired response.

The information obtained may be utilized in the preparation of a contract solicitation provided the Government finds it to be in its best interest. Proprietary information, if any, should be kept to a minimum in the response and **MUST** be clearly marked. All submissions become the Government's property and will not be returned.

No reimbursement will be made for any costs associated with providing information in response to this RFI or any follow-up information requests.

Submission Instructions:

Written response must be limited to 25 pages or less and must identify the company's point of contact.

Response must be sent electronically via email to mnewton@gpo.gov. The subject line of the email should contain the RFI number (RFI 0001 (R-1)). No telephone, mailed, or faxed responses will be accepted. Response must be received by 2:00 p.m., Eastern Time (ET) on August 21, 2026.

Samples of binding products must be sent to:

U.S. Government Publishing Office
Government Publishing & Print Procurement, QCPP
Attn: John Carey, Stop CSPA, Room C848
732 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20401

Package containing binding samples must be identified by the RFI number (RFI 0001 (R-1)) and "BINDING SAMPLES."