

PRODUCTION OF VARIOUS PRINTED PRODUCTS CONSISTING OF QUESTIONNAIRES, LETTERS, INSERTS, POSTCARDS, BUSINESS REPLY ENVELOPES, AND OUTGOING ENVELOPES REQUIRING SUCH OPERATIONS AS ELECTRONIC PREPRESS, PRINTING, COMPUTERIZED VARIABLE IMAGING, BINDING, CONSTRUCTION, PACKING, AND DISTRIBUTION.

**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 questionnaire, letter, insert and business reply envelope mailing package production. 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 production formats, including saddle-stitch and paste-on-fold requirements for questionnaires to achieve desired objectives.

1. Minimize production cost
2. Increase overall productivity
3. Ensure continuous product availability
4. Utilize requirements common to the production of questionnaire mailing packages
5. Maintain 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 mandatory requirements 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 excerpts from a previous GPO contract (Attachment A) provide details about questionnaire mailing package requirements including binding descriptions of two questionnaires. 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.
2. 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.

3. 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 four (4) months from delivery. The glue shall be applied, with no gaps, along the bind edge and extends 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.
4. After printing and binding, fold from 9 x 11" to 9 x 5-1/2" (with page 1 (English or Bilingual, as applicable, 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 complete details describing how they would address the notice requirements.

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

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.

Provide a narrative including responses to the following questions regarding production of the questionnaire requirements using saddle-stitch, paste-on-fold, or other alternative binding process, if allowed.

- How will each different binding process affect the production schedule?
  - a. Will it improve daily production counts?
  - b. Approximate increase/decrease?
- What are the highest production volumes that can be yielded from your printing and binding equipment? Include equipment list, model, and volumes.
- What are the cost savings with each binding process?

If possible, provide a sample of the suggested binding process like the products in the contract for evaluation and testing by GPO Quality Control for Print Products. Samples must include examples of any ink, text, and images/logos as described in the contract specifications.

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 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 announcement 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](mailto:mnewton@gpo.gov). The subject line of the email should contain the RFI number (RFI 0001). No telephone, mail, or faxed responses will be accepted. Response must be received by 2:00 p.m., Eastern Time (ET) on June 1, 2026.

Samples of binding products must be sent to:

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

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

## ATTACHMENT A: STATEMENT OF WORK - SPECIFICATIONS

**SCOPE:** The 2030 Decennial Census is expected to consist of various printed products including, but not limited to, questionnaires, letters, inserts, postcards, business reply envelopes, and outgoing envelopes requiring such operations as electronic prepress, printing, computerized variable imaging, binding, construction, assembling, packaging, packing, and distribution.

The purpose of this RFI is to gather information regarding the production of the questionnaires, specifically binding methods.

The below specifications are for the questionnaires only and are based on historical data. There is no guarantee that the 2030 Census questionnaires will be produced exactly as specified below.

**QUANTITY:** Approximately 140,000,000 copies.

**NUMBER OF PAGES:** 8 or 16 pages.

**TRIM SIZE:** 9 x 11".

**GOVERNMENT TO FURNISH:** Copy for the questionnaires will be furnished electronically.

**PRINTING:** Questionnaires print in either two or three ink colors. Questionnaires consist of static text matter and variable data.

**BINDING:** Historically, the questionnaires have saddle stitched as follows:

*Saddle-Stitching:* Saddle-wire stitch in two places on the 11" dimension and trim three sides. 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 will not be allowed.

When 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 stitches must not overlap. Stitches must be at least 1" from the head and foot of product.

*Stitch Alignment:* Saddle-stitch on the fold (11" dimension). Alignment of the stitches in the direction of the spine shall be such that both bends of the stitch fall within the fold of the spine as viewed from the outside of the form (See EXHIBIT A below, "*Skewness, Top Views*"). This requirement does not imply that the point of emergence through the innermost sheet of the signature must lie within the fold of the spine as viewed from the outside of the form (See EXHIBIT A below, "*Location, End Views*"). All stitches shall be crimped tightly enough so that the stitch may not be pulled away from the spine, but not so tightly as to break the surface of the spine.

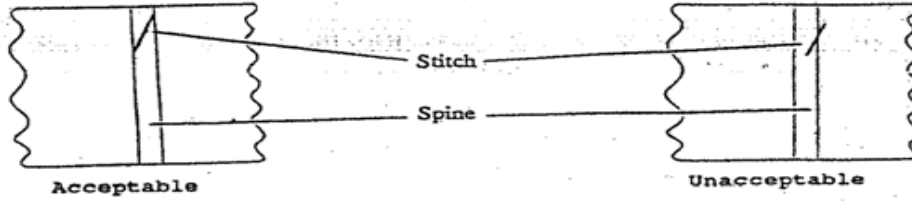
*Inside the Questionnaire:* The gap between the ends of the stitch legs shall not exceed 1/16" and the overlap shall not exceed 1/32". All stitches shall be crimped tightly enough so that no movement of the pages relative to each other is allowed. The ends of the stitches shall be tight against the paper. All stitches shall not be crimped so tightly as to break the surface of the paper. However, the ends of the stitches may penetrate the innermost sheet of the signature. Inside sheets must be stitched no more than 1/16" from the fold.

**ASSEMBLING, PACKAGING, AND PACKING CONFIGURATIONS:** Questionnaires will be packaged with other items in various configurations and inserted into mail-out envelopes for mailing to individual households, or the questionnaires will be packed in containers for shipment back to Census.

# EXHIBIT A

## STITCHING LOCATION DIAGRAM

### *Skewness, Top Views*



### *Location, End Views*

