

contracts and, in doing so, have created an environment that makes it difficult for small businesses to flourish.

The President is committed to ensuring that agencies take full advantage of competition in contracting, especially the services of small business contractors. This commitment, like those in the President's Management Agenda generally, reflect the Administration's focus on strengthening the performance of government through results-oriented initiatives—i.e., in this case, improving the return on taxpayer investments in contracting. To this end, OMB has been instructed both to review competition practices at agencies with significant procurement activities and to develop a strategy to address contract bundling.

OMB has established two inter-agency working groups to carry out these efforts: one working group will address agency competition practices; the other will develop a strategy for unbundling contracts whenever practicable. OMB seeks public comment from all interested parties, and especially from small businesses, to inform these working groups. Comments are especially welcome on the following topics:

1. *Use of other than full and open competition.* What are the positive and negative effects of authorities that allow competition on other than a full and open basis?

• Authorities to consider might include:

(1) Micro-purchase authority (see Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 13.2);

(2) Authority to transact using the government-wide purchase card (see FAR 13.301);

(3) Authority to seek competition to the "maximum extent practicable" and use of simplified source selection procedures for acquisitions under the SAT (see FAR part 13 generally) and up to \$5 million for the acquisition of commercial items (see FAR subpart 13.5);

(4) Authority to conduct limited competitions through MACs (see FAR 16.504 and 16.505) and the MAS program (see FAR subpart 8.4); and

(5) Inter-agency contracting through government-wide acquisition contracts (i.e., task or delivery order contracts for information technology established for government-wide use and operated by executive agents designated by OMB), multi-agency contracts (i.e., task or delivery order contracts established for use by government agencies consistent with the Economy Act), or other contracts for multiple agency use.

• Effects to consider might include:

(a) Opportunities to learn about and participate in planned acquisitions;

(b) Ability of contractors to offer, or agencies to secure: (i) Fair and reasonable pricing, (ii) favorable terms and conditions, and (iii) timely delivery of good and services; and

(c) Ability of contractors to make meaningful offers and agencies to make rationally-based decisions.

2. *Use of full and open competition.* What are the effects, positive and negative, of changes made in the way full and open competition is pursued, such as under Part 15 of the FAR? (For effects to consider, see question no. 1.)

3. *Areas of impact.* Have the authorities identified in question nos. 1 and 2 had an especially noticeable effect on any particular: (a) Dollar range, (b) contract type, or (c) product or service category?

4. *Barriers to small business participation.* What barriers presently make it difficult for small businesses to participate in federal procurement, and what steps can be taken to remove barriers to participation, particularly in full and open competitions?

5. *Contract bundling.* If you believe that agency contract bundling has direct effects on participation by small businesses in federal contracting, what steps can be taken to mitigate those effects?

6. *Application of electronic commerce techniques.* How has electronic commerce affected contractor participation in government contracting in general, and small business participation in particular, and in what, if any, ways can its applications be improved to increase participation in government contracting?

7. *Studies and articles on competition and bundling.* What, if any, recent studies or articles addressing competition or contract bundling in federal contracting should be considered by OMB's competition and bundling working groups?

Special Accommodations

The public meeting is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to Ms. Diering (202-395-3254) at least 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Angela B. Styles,
Administrator.

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OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Proposed Collection; Comment Request for Review of an Expiring Information Collection: Establishment Information Form, Wage Data Collection Form, Wage Data Collection Continuation Form DD 1918, DD 1919, and DD 1919C

AGENCY: Office of Personnel
Management.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13, May 22, 1995), this notice announces that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) intends to submit to the Office of Management and Budget a request for clearance of an information collection. The Establishment Information Form, the Wage Data Collection Form, and the Wage Data Collection Continuation Form are wage survey forms developed by OPM for use by the Department of Defense to establish prevailing wage rates for Federal Wage System employees.

The Department of Defense contacts approximately 21,200 businesses annually to determine the level of wages paid by private enterprise establishments for representative jobs common to both private industry and the Federal Government. Each survey collection requires 1-4 hours of respondent burden, resulting in a total yearly burden of approximately 75,800 hours.

Comments are particularly invited on: whether this information is necessary for the proper performance of functions of the Office of Personnel Management, and whether it will have practical utility; whether our estimate of the public burden of this collection of information is accurate, and based on valid assumptions and methodology; and ways in which we can minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through the use of appropriate technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

For copies of this proposal, contact Mary Beth Smith-Toomey on (202) 606-8358, fax (202) 418-3251, or e-mail to mbtoomey@opm.gov. Please include a mailing address with your request.

DATES: Comments on this proposal must be received within 60 calendar days after the date of this publication.

ADDRESSES: Send or deliver written comments to:

Donald J. Winstead, Assistant Director
for Compensation Administration,
Workforce Compensation and

Performance Service, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 1900 E Street NW., Room 7H31, Washington, DC 20415-8200.

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION—CONTACT:

Mark A. Allen, Salary and Wage Systems Division, Office of Compensation Administration, (202) 606-2848.

Office of Personnel Management.

Kay Coles James,

Director.

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POSTAL RATE COMMISSION

[Order No. 1339; Docket No. MC2002-1]

Classification and Fees for Confirm® Service

AGENCY: Postal Rate Commission.

ACTION: Notice and order concerning Confirm® service.

SUMMARY: This document informs the public that the Postal Service has asked the Commission for a decision on classification and fees for Confirm®, a new service to enable mailers to track automation compatible letter-size and flat mail pieces. It also establishes several procedural deadlines and sets a date for a prehearing conference and possible informal settlement discussions.

DATES: *May 16, 2002:* deadline for notices of intervention.

May 20, 2002: prehearing conference (at 1 p.m.) and tentatively scheduled informal settlement discussion (at 9:30 a.m.) if notice is served on participants by the Postal Service.

May 23, 2002: deadline for answers to conditional motion for waiver.

ADDRESSES: The prehearing conference will be held in the Commission's hearing room, 1333 H Street NW., suite 300, Washington, DC 20268-0001. Send notices and comments to the attention of Steven W. Williams, secretary, 1333 H Street NW., suite 300, Washington, DC 20268-0001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Stephen L. Sharfman, General Counsel, 202-789-6824.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Authority To Consider the Service's Request

39 U.S.C. 3622 and 3623.

B. Background

On April 24, 2002, the Postal Service filed a request for a recommended

decision on classification and fees for Confirm®, a new service using PLANET Codes (a new form of bar code) to enable commercial mailers to track individual automation compatible letter-size and flat mail pieces. Request of the United States Postal Service for a recommended decision on classification and fees for Confirm®, April 24, 2002 (request). The request was accompanied by a statement of compliance with the Commission's filing requirements and a conditional motion for waiver. In addition, the Postal Service requests that proceedings to consider Confirm® be expedited.

Establishing a Formal Docket

The Postal Service's request was filed pursuant to sections 3622 and 3623 of the Postal Reorganization Act, 39 U.S.C. 101 *et seq.* The Commission hereby institutes a proceeding, designated as docket no. MC2002-1, to consider the instant request. In the course of this proceeding, participants may propose alternatives to the Service's proposal, and the Service itself may revise, supplement, or amend its initial filing. The Commission's review of the Service's request, including any revisions, alternatives proposed by others, or options legally within the purview of the Service's request, may result in recommendations that differ from those proposed by the Postal Service in its initial filing.

Contents of the filing

As a preliminary matter, the Commission has posted the request and related material on its website at www.prc.gov. Subsequent filings in this case will also be posted on the website, if provided in electronic format or amenable to conversion, and not subject to a valid protective order. Information on how to use the Commission's website is available online or by contacting the Commission's webmaster at 202-789-6873.

The entire filing and related documents are also available for public inspection in the Commission's docket section. The docket section's hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on federal government holidays. The docket section telephone number is 202-789-6846.

The request includes six attachments as follows. Attachment A contains the proposed amendments to the domestic mail classification schedule (DMCS); Attachment B sets forth the proposed fee schedule. Attachment C is the required certification concerning the accuracy of the cost statements and supporting data submitted as part of the request. Attachment D contains the audited financial statements for FY 2000

and FY 2001. Citing USPS-LR-J-2, the Postal Service notes that the cost and revenue analysis report for FY 2000 was filed in docket no. R2001-1. Appendix E is an index of testimonies, workpapers, and associated attorneys. Appendix F represents the Postal Service's compliance statement in response to Commission rules 54 and 64, 39 CFR 3001.54 and 3001.64.

In support of the request, the Postal Service also submitted the testimony of five witnesses. Witness Bakshi, a Postal Service employee, describes Confirm® service, its operation, and its implementation. *See* USPS-T-1. Witness Lubenow, a consultant, provides both background and an industry perspective concerning Confirm® service. *See* USPS-T-2. Witness Nieto, a consultant, provides estimated test year costs in support of the proposed Confirm® fees. *See* USPS-T-3. Witness Rothschild, a consultant, presents the results of survey research undertaken to assess the market demand for Confirm® products at two different pricing scenarios. *See* USPS-T-4. Witness Keifer, a Postal Service employee, describes the proposed fee design and classification changes. Witness Keifer also addresses the financial impacts associated with Confirm®. *See* USPS-T-5.

In addition, the Postal Service filed two Category 2 library references supporting the prepared testimony: USPS-LR-1, witness Rothschild's (USPS-T-4) CONFIRM market research, and USPS-LR-2 supporting spreadsheets for witness Nieto (USPS-T-3).

Brief Description of the Proposal

The Postal Service proposes to offer Confirm® in a three-tiered subscription format, with the subscriptions labeled platinum, gold, and silver. As proposed, Confirm® service will be available to users of First-Class Mail, Standard mail, and Periodicals. Confirm® service will enable subscribers to track qualified outgoing and incoming mail, providing information about each mailpiece, *e.g.*, the date and time processed, the processing facility, and barcode data.

The proposed annual fee for a platinum subscription is \$10,000, which entitles the subscriber to three ID codes and unlimited scans. The proposed annual fee for a gold subscription is \$4500, entitling the subscriber to one ID code and 50 million scans. A silver subscription is available for a term of three months and entitles the subscriber to one ID code and 15 million scans. The proposed fee is \$2000. *See* USPS-T-5 at 2.