

Attachment 17 – Questions and Answers

The following questions were submitted in writing by Vendor A. (Answers follow.)

1. General. Are signatures requested on forms and other documents required to be wet ink signatures or are electronic signatures acceptable?

A: PEBA's preference is to have wet signatures and have planned timing of the RFP to allow for this. However, we will accept electronic signatures as long as the proposal meets all the other requirements of the RFP.

2. General. In addition to matching the current plan design, will the State accept alternate plan proposals?

A: PEBA is looking for proposals that meet or exceed the current plan, however PEBA is not looking for alternate proposals.

3. Cover Page – pg. 1-2. Does the Cover Page form need to be included in both the Technical Proposal and Business Proposal packages or only the Technical Proposal?

A: Please included the cover page in both the Technical Proposal and Business Proposal.

4. Part 5 – Information for Offerors to Submit – pg. 29. In paragraph 1 of this section, Offerors are instructed to submit a signed transmittal sheet indicating that we have submitted every format and proposal that is being requested. Should this be an entirely separate document and be included in the Technical Proposal section? If so, please state the requested name and format of this document.

A: The transmittal sheet can be a separate sheet included in the Technical proposal.

5. Part 5 – 5.1 Technical Proposal – 5.1.5 Offeror's Proposed Group Vision Benefits Plan – pg. 30. Item 5.1.5 requests that we respond to each item listed under under categories A-K (Account Management – Implementation) Part 3 Scope of Work. There are also 6 items listed prior to categories A-K beginning. Should we also provide a detailed response to each of those first 6 items?

A: Yes.

6. Part 6 – Award Criteria – pg. 36. Would you be willing to provide the weighting of the Award Criteria and the details of how Part A, “Offeror’s proposed Group Vision Benefits Plan,” is being evaluated?

A: No. However, it should be noted that, although the specific weightings will not be provided, the Award Criteria are listed in order of importance.

7. Part 8 – Attachments to Solicitation – Attachment 3 – pg. 59-63. Can you provide a Word or PDF version that is editable so we are able to complete Attachment 3, “Service Provider Security Assessment Questionnaire?”

A: No. That document stands as written. If you require additional space, please use a separate sheet and attach it to Attachment 3.

The following questions were submitted in writing by Vendor B. (Answers follow.)

8. With respect to Attachment 1, page 57, are you willing to waive the seal request – Nonresident Taxpayer Registration Affidavit Income Tax Withholding form?

A: If you have questions regarding Attachment 1, please see contact information for the South Carolina Department of Revenue found on page 56, Important Tax Notice – Nonresidents Only.

9. With respect to RFP page 1, Attachment 1 (page 57), Attachment 3 (pages 59-63), and Attachment 6 (pages 67-72): After the start of COVID, given the difficulty in coordinating ink signatures with authorized signers located across the country, we began standardly asking if e-signatures are acceptable. This has evolved into a best business practice. Please let us know if e-signatures will suffice.

A: See answer to Question 1.

10. With respect to Attachment 3 (pages 56-63), we are asked to complete a Security Assessment Document. The document provided is not editable in its current format.

In order to ensure we are able to provide a timely response to the security assessment, can an editable copy be released prior to the Amendment Issue date?

A: See answer to question 7.

11. Please explain the reason(s) that this RFP is out to the market.

A: The South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority follows the South Carolina Consolidated Procurement Code; therefore, these services are being resolicited in compliance with the Code as PEBA is in year five of a five year contract.

12. What are the current employer contributions percentages?

A: There are no employer contributions to the vision product; all premiums are paid by the subscriber.

13. Have the employer contributions changed within the last 36 months?

A: There are no employer contributions to the vision product; however, employee premiums have changed over the last three years.

Year	Employee	Employee/Spouse	Employee/Children	Full Family
2021	\$5.80	\$11.60	\$12.46	\$18.20
2022	\$5.94	\$11.88	\$12.76	\$18.70
2023	\$5.94	\$11.88	\$12.76	\$18.70

14. Is COBRA Administration expected to be provided by the carrier?

A: See page 17, Section 2.2 Background.

15. Does the customer currently partner with or have plans to partner with a third-party entity that will assist in their benefit administration? Please include the name(s) of the entity partner(s) being considered and explain the scope of services they will provide.

A: No.

16. What specific services would the requested credit funds would be covering? Who will be performing the services (customer, broker, TPA)?

A: The fee covers PEBA’s management, enrollment, billing, collecting, communication, marketing, education, and remittance of payment to the contractor for the vision plan.

17. Are EyeMed booklets, SPDs, or certificates available describing the current plan design in more detail?

A: For Plan design, see Attachments 8 and 9, posted to the web. [Procurement Services \(sc.gov\)](https://www.sc.gov/procurement-services)

18. Have there been any plan design changes over the past 48 months? If so, please provide the details and dates of any change(s).

A: No, there have been no plan design changes over the past 48 months

19. Please confirm the percentage of claims paid In-Network.

A: 2023 – 97.9%

2022 – 97.9%

2021 – 98.0%

20. Please provide December 2023 Paid Claims Data when made available.

A: Please refer to Attachment 12 (updated) for requested information.

21. Please provide the Full EyeMed Customer Analysis Utilization Report for the last 48 months.

A: Please refer to Attachment 13 (updated) for updated utilization data.

22. Please provide the December 2023 utilization data when made available.

A: See answer to Question 21.

23. Please provide annual utilization for 2019.

A: The current contract began January 1, 2020. We do not have data for 2019.

24. Is all experience available broken out by Active and Retired employees?

A: No. PEBA does not maintain the data in this manner.

25. Please provide a census file that includes the run date as well as the following key information:

- a. Gender**
- b. Zip code**
- c. State of Residence**
- d. Tier enrollment (such as *Employee Only, Employee +1, Family, etc.*)**
- e. Active/Retired status**
- f. Date of birth**
- g. Descriptions of abbreviations in any of the provided fields (such as "Status", "Coverage Option", etc.)**

A: See Attachment 14 for items a and f (PEBA will provide data by age for subscriber and for dependent counts). See Attachment 7 for items b and c (Zip codes for SC begin with 29). See page 18, Section 2.2 Background for items d and e. Item g -- PEBA did not use abbreviations in the data fields.

26. The Subscriber Count in 2018 was 182,000. The 2023 Subscriber Count is 230,561. Please explain the 27% increase in enrollment. Please confirm count of new hires per year, as well as expected new hires/layoffs or other major changes.

A: Increase in enrollment can be attributed to growth in the number of participating employer groups from 2018 to 2023. The employer group count grew from 715 to 832 respectively, increasing the number of subscribers who can enroll in the plan. Also, PEBA holds an open enrollment period for the State Vision Plan during October every year with coverage becoming effective January 1 of the subsequent year. (Please refer to page 20 of the RFP). PEBA is not able to confirm the count of new hires or expected counts for new hires/layoff or other major changes using the enrollment data it maintains.

27. Are the renewal rates available?

A: See page 18 of the RFP for current premiums. Renewal rates are based on the RFP terms and conditions.

28. Are there any pass-through or explicit administrative charges included in the current and historical rates?

A: No pass-through or explicit administrative charges are included in the current and historical rates.

29. Is a recent billing invoice available including the lives and current rates?

A: See Attachment 15.

30. Does PEBA expect to pay premiums within a 30-day grace period?

A: See RFP page 39, Section 7.13 Payments & Interest (2015).

31. With respect to Attachment 6, pages 67-72, Vendor B will issue a Group Contract which, as required by law, governs with respect to all matters of insurance. Does the State agree, with respect to Contract Documents and Order of Precedence set forth in the RFP, that the Group Contract will govern?

A: The Order of Precedence clause stands. The group contract will govern the provision of vision insurance, but the group contract must comply with the terms of the RFP, and there cannot be discrepancies between the two.

32. With respect to Part 7.39 on page 47, Information Security Definitions, does the State agree to Vendor B's proposed modifications to the definition of "data"?

Data means information provided by the State to the Contractor ~~means a subset of information in an electronic format that allows it to be retrieved or transmitted.~~

A: No. The RFP stands as written.

33. With respect to Part 7.40 on pages 47-49, Information Security Safeguarding Requirements, Does the State agree to Vendor B's proposed modifications:

(c) Safeguarding requirements and procedure.

(2) Transmitting electronic information. Transmit email, text messages, blogs, and similar communications that contain government information using technology and processes that provide industry standard ~~the best~~ level of security and privacy available, given facilities, conditions, and environment.

A: Transmitting electronic information. Transmit email, text messages, blogs, and similar communications that contain government information using technology and processes that provide industry standard (as approved by PEBA) level of security and privacy available, given facilities, conditions, and environment.

(5) Sanitization. At a minimum, clear information on media that have been used to process government information before external release or disposal. Overwriting is an acceptable means of clearing media in **alignment accordance** with National Institute of Standards and Technology 800–88, Guidelines for Media Sanitization, at http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/nistpubs/800-88/NISTSP800-88_with-errata.pdf.

A: No. The RFP stands as written.

34. With respect to Attachment 6, Business Associate Agreement, page 69, item 2. Obligations and Activities of Business Associate, will the State agree to Vendor B's proposed modification?

Business Associate agrees to notify Covered Entity within ~~two~~ **five** business days of becoming aware of any use or disclosure of PHI not provided for by the Agreement or of any security incident resulting in the successful unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification or destruction of information or interference with system operations in an information system, or resulting in any "Breach" of "Unsecured Protected Health Information," as required by 45 CFR 164.410.

A: No. The RFP stands as written.

The following questions were submitted in writing by Vendor C. (Answers follow.)

PART 3 - SCOPE OF WORK

35. B. Enrollment and Eligibility (Page 20)

3. PEBA shall determine and maintain enrollment and eligibility information. PEBA shall provide the Contractor, on a daily basis, an electronic file of enrollment updates including adds, terminations, and changes since the last file transmission. The Contractor shall accept, process, maintain and update enrollment information from the files provided by PEBA within 48 hours of receipt. The Contractor shall verify eligibility from enrollment data provided by PEBA. The Contractor shall refer to PEBA for its consideration, and defer to PEBA final decision, on any questions with respect to subscriber or dependent eligibility for benefits. Electronic enrollment updates are transmitted nightly, Monday through Friday, except holidays

Can you confirm if PEBA will transmit enrollment updates on every calendar day or business day?

A: See the RFP page 20, Section B. Enrollment and Eligibility, Item 3.

36. B. Enrollment and Eligibility (Page 20)

5. The Contractor shall provide a secure online connection for purposes of permitting selected PEBA personnel access to make online inquiries of the Contractor's eligibility database. The preferred method of connectivity is through a secure, encrypted VPN tunnel or HTTPS web connection.

Would granting access to our eligibility database satisfy this requirement?

A: Yes, as long as the connection is secure.

37. D. Billing and Collection of Premiums (page 23)

4. The Contractor shall pay PEBA a flat fee of \$275,000 each year as its administrative fee for billing and other administrative services. This fee shall be paid to PEBA using EFT in two (2) payments of \$137,500 each, due February 1 and August 1 of each year.

Can you further define what services are provided under the "administrative services" to account for the \$275,000 annual payment.

A: See answer to Question 16.

38. I. Performance Standards and Associated Guarantees (Liquidated Damages)

k) Member satisfaction survey

Is PEBA willing to share overall results/stats of the Member satisfaction surveys that the current provider conducted throughout 2023?

A: In 2023, the overall member satisfaction survey results were 97%.

39. J. Provider Network (Page 27)

1. The Contractor shall provide and maintain a network of vision providers that include chains, independents and health system affiliated practices that are geographically accessible to State Vision Plan members. PEBA desires the maximum participation by all willing vision care providers and the greatest geographical coverage for the Provider Network within the State, including rural areas.

Please provide a listing of the Top 50 Most Utilized Providers during 2023, including all health system affiliated practices which may have been contracted into the current vision network on an exception basis. Please include national provider number, tax ID, office name, provider name and full address.

A: See Attachment 15 (updated).

40. K. Implementation Plan (not an evaluated item) (page 28)

5. The Contractor shall pay PEBA the amount of \$500 per business day in the event of any failure by the Contractor to adhere to the Final Implementation Plan, as agreed upon between the Contractor and PEBA (and without the express written waiver of PEBA before the date of the agreed upon time for completion). If, after 15 days' notice, the Contractor has failed to pay any amount due hereunder, the amount shall be withdrawn from the security (See Section 7.45 Performance Bond Required).

Would an implementation guarantee satisfy the fee above? How would PEBA expect this to be paid?

A: Please propose as specified.

41. PART 6 – AWARD CRITERIA (Page 36)

Award will be made to the highest ranked, responsive and responsible Offeror whose offer is determined to be the most advantageous to the State. Award will be made to one Offeror.

Upon review of prior PEBA solicitations for Group Vision Benefits, please explain any difference between titling the 2019 solicitation as an Invitation for Bids versus this solicitation as a Request for Proposal. What criteria does PEBA use when establishing the Award Criteria for a specific solicitation?

A: The South Carolina Consolidated Procurement Code, Section 11-35-310 Definitions states the following:

(21) “Invitation for bids” means a written or published solicitation issued by an authorized procurement officer for bids to contract for the procurement or disposal of stated supplies, services, information technology, or construction, which will ordinarily result in the award of the contract to the responsible bidder making the lowest responsive bid.

(30) “Request for proposals” (RFP) means a written or published solicitation issued by an authorized procurement officer for bids to contract for the procurement or disposal of stated supplies, services, information technology, or construction, which ordinarily results in the award of the contract to the responsible offeror making the proposal determined to be most advantageous to the State.

**42. PART 8 ATTACHMENTS TO SOLICITATION
Attachment 6. Business Associate Agreement (Page 67)**

- **The vision carrier would be considered a covered entity under HIPAA and the relationship with South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority is under a fully-insured agreement, therefore, a BAA between the two companies is not required, nor would it be appropriate. Please provide PEBA’s reasoning on why the BAA is required.**

A: PEBA is a covered entity and all subscriber data that will be transmitted from PEBA to the Contractor for enrollment and eligibility is PHI and must be covered by a BAA between PEBA and the Contractor.