Iowa Vendor Self Service

Solicitations Reference Guide

Spring, 2015 v1

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I.   Overview

Iowa Vendor Self Service (Iowa VSS) is an internet based application that provides a way for vendors to review solicitations published by the State of Iowa and bid on those solicitations.   If you have registered with the State of Iowa using the Iowa VSS application, you will receive an email each time a solicitation is published with the commodity codes for which you have registered.
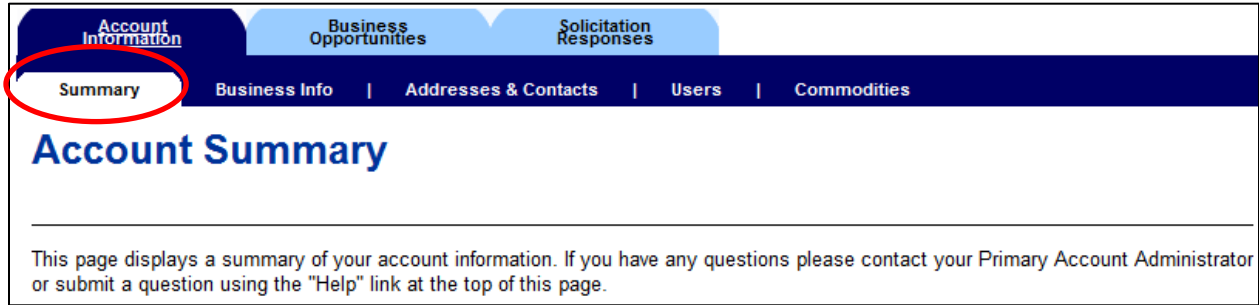
There are two levels of access to Iowa VSS, public access and full access. Public access allows anyone to locate solicitations, review the details associated with them, print them, and ask questions without having to register for a user ID. Registration adds the ability to track solicitations, bid on solicitations, and be notified of award information. This reference guide explains how to locate, track, print, and ask questions about solicitations; it assumes you have already read the Iowa Vendor Self Service (VSS) *Registration Quick Start Guide* and *Iowa Vendor Self Service (VSS) Account Help Guide* and subsequently registered for full access. (If you are not registered in Iowa VSS you can view solicitations by clicking on the Public Access button on the left side of the screen.)

II.   Account Verification

When you log into the application with your registered user id, you *may* be asked to verify/update your user information. This verification occurs frequently but not every time you log in.

III.   Iowa VSS Interface

The Iowa VSS interface is divided into tabs, sub-tabs, and the informational area. For registered vendors, Iowa VSS opens to the **Account Information tab, Summary sub-tab:**
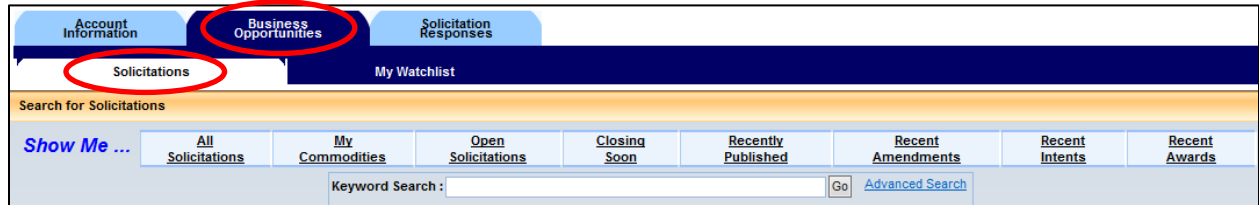

To access published solicitations, open the **Business Opportunities tab, Solicitations sub-tab**:

IV. Locating Solicitations

A. Searching for a Specific Solicitation

The **Keyword Search** field in the *Solicitations* page is the only search field displayed by default.

To see more search fields, click the Advanced Search link:

The table below provides details about the search fields. You can enter alpha or numeric characters in the **Keyword Search field**; case is ignored. The other three search fields use a drop-down list with pre-defined search elements:

	Search Field	How to Search	What is Searched	Search Results
1	**Keyword Search**	Type in a word(s) or text that you expect to appear in the solicitation	Commodity Description Solicitation Name Solicitation Description Department Number Issuer Name	Only those solicitations that contain the text you entered will be returned.
2	**Category**	Solicitation categories are not used by the State.	N/A	N/A
3	**Status**	Click the black arrow to open the drop-down list. Select an entry from the list.	Each solicitation has a status of *Open, Closed, Awarded,* or *Cancelled*. You may filter all solicitations using an entry in this list.	Only those solicitations that have the status you selected from the filter list will be returned.
4	**Type**	Click the black arrow to open the drop-down list. Select an entry from the list.	Each solicitation must be an *RFP, RFQ, RFI,* or *RFB*. You may filter all solicitations using an entry in this list.	Only those solicitations that are the type you selected from the filter list will be returned.

B. Filtering Solicitations

The *Show Me* filters, located above the **Keyword Search** field are a set of pre-defined filters that offer a quick way to limit the number of solicitations displayed.
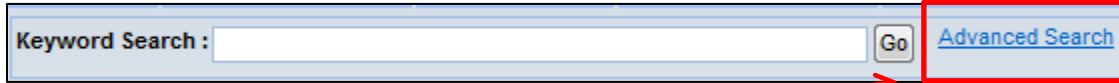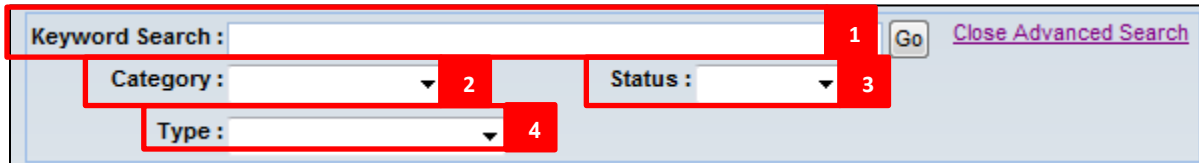
Show Me ...	All Solicitations	My Commodities	Open Solicitations	Closing Soon	Recently Published	Recent Amendments	Recent Intents	Recent Awards
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

The following table describes how each *Show Me* filter works:

	Filter	What is Returned by the Filter
1	All Solicitations	This filter displays all solicitations.
2	My Commodities	This filter returns a list of solicitations containing the commodity codes for which you registered.
3	Open Solicitations	This filter returns a list of solicitations that are open for bidding.
4	Closing Soon	This filter returns a list of solicitations closing in the next 10 days
5	Recently Published	This filter returns a list of solicitations published to Iowa VSS in the last 30 days.
6	Recent Amendments	This filter returns a list of solicitations amended in the last 10 days.
7	Recent Intents	This filter returns a list of solicitations that have entered the Intent to Award phase in the last 10 days
8	Recent Awards	This filter returns a list of solicitations awarded in the last 90 days

V. Information Provided for a Solicitation

The *Solicitations* page displays the following basic information for each solicitation:

Information Displayed	Description of Information
Solicitation Name & Description	The solicitation name is composed of 3 elements of information: Type – State Dept. code – Identification code. The solicitation description displays above the solicitation name if the issuer provided a description.
Agency/Issuer/Category	The issuer's name and the State agency s(he) works for is displayed in this column.
Dates	Publish Date, Amended Date, Closing Date/Time, Time Left, and Intent to Award Posting Date are displayed in this column.
Status	This column displays whether the solicitation is Open for bidding, Closed for bidding, Awarded to a vendor(s), or Cancelled.

In addition to basic information, each solicitation in the *Solicitations* page has a **Summary** button to provide additional information. If you click on this button you will see a box with Basic information plus additional information such as the number of attached files associated with that solicitation and the issuer's contact information. Issuers often attach files to their solicitations in order to include details that cannot be displayed otherwise.

RFQ - 005 - 03131400002
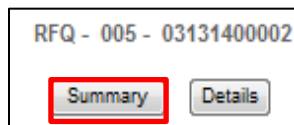
[Summary] [Details]

In addition to basic and summary information, each solicitation in the *Solicitations* page has a **Details** button to provide comprehensive information:

RFQ - 005 - 03131400002

[Summary] [Details]
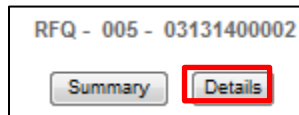
Clicking on this button opens a new page displaying sections that provide detail about that solicitation:

Lots/Lines	Attachments	Additional Information	Terms	Criteria	Events	Q & A List	Amendment History	Intent to Award	Notice of Award
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The following table provides explanations of the different columns you will see in each section of a solicitation's Details:

Section		Column	Information Displayed
1	Lots/Lines	Description	A description of the commodities or services being solicited
		Requested	Quantity, unit, and requested delivery date for item commodities being solicited. Service start and end dates for service commodities being solicited
		More Information	Product specifications and shipping/billing specifications

2	Attachments	File Name	The name of each file that is attached to the solicitation is displayed here. The name is actually a link to the file so you can click on it and open the file or download it.
		Date	The date each file was attached to the solicitation
		Description	A short description of each file
		Attachment Type	The type of each attached file is displayed here. Some file types you might see attached are Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, picture files, and PDF files.
3	Additional Information	Additional Information	Relevant information may be displayed here at the issuer's discretion.
4	Terms	Line	The line number associated with a specific term or condition
		Name	The name associated with a specific term or condition
		Details	Details associated with a specific term or condition
5	Criteria	Criteria	If the issuer has included criteria to evaluate vendor responses, this is the line number of the criterion.
		Points	Not used
		Description	This is a description of the associated evaluation criterion.
		Mandatory YES Answer	If the evaluation criteria requires a mandatory 'YES' answer, 'Yes' will display here.
		Response Type Expected	This is the type of response from the vendor that the issuer is expecting for the associated criterion. Valid types are Text, Date, Yes/No, Number, and None.
6	Events	Event	If the issuer has scheduled an event(s) associated with the solicitation, there will be a short name/description here.
		Date	If the issuer has scheduled an event(s) associated with the solicitation, this is the date for the event(s).
7	Q & A List	Question	If a vendor has publicly asked a question through Iowa VSS, it will display here.
		Question Date	If a vendor has publicly asked a question through Iowa VSS, the date of the question will display here.
		Answer	When the issuer responds to a question, the response will display here.
		Answer Date	The date of the issuer's response will appear here.
8	Amendment History	Amendment	If the issuer has amended the original solicitation, the amendment number will display here.
		Location	If the issuer has amended the original solicitation, this column indicates in which section of the solicitation details to look for the update:

|			Lots/Lines, Attachments, Additional Information, Terms, Criteria, or Events section.
		Action	If the issuer has amended the original solicitation, this column will tell you what the action was: *Add, Modify, or Delete*.
		Description Text	If the issuer has amended the original solicitation, a brief description of the associated amendment will be displayed here.
		Date	If the issuer has amended the original solicitation, the date of the associated amendment will display here.
9	**Intent to Award**	**Lot**	Commodities may be solicited individually or in groups. If an award is pending for the associated solicitation, this column will display the group number associated with a specific commodity line. If no grouping exists, Iowa VSS will display all commodities in group 1 by default.
		Line	This is the line number of the associated commodity pending award.
		Vendor	This is the vendor for the Notice of Intent.
		Description	This is a description of the commodity that is pending award.
		Quantity	This is the quantity of units for the associated item commodity that is pending award.
		Unit	This is the unit that the associated item commodity is measured by such as EA (each), Ton, Bag, etc…
		Unit Price	This is the price for each unit of the commodity that is pending award.
		Contract Amount	This is the total amount of the associated service commodity that is pending award.
		Awarded Date	This is the date the associated commodity went into pending award status.
		Discount	This is the discount percentage from catalog price that is associated with the commodity that is pending award.
10	**Notice of Award**	**Lot**	This column displays the group number associated with a specific commodity line. If no grouping exists, Iowa VSS will display all commodities in group 1 by default.
		Line	This is the line number of the awarded commodity.
		Vendor	This is the official winning vendor.
		Description	This is a description of the commodity that is officially awarded.
		Quantity	This is the quantity of units for the associated item commodity that is officially awarded.
		Unit	This is the unit that the associated item commodity is measured by such as EA (each), Ton, Bag, etc…

|	Unit Price	This is the unit price for the commodity that is officially awarded.
	Contract Amount	This is the total amount of the associated service commodity that is officially awarded.
	Awarded Date	This is the date the associated commodity was officially awarded.
	Discount	This is the discount percentage from catalog price that is associated with the commodity that is officially awarded.

VI. Tracking a Solicitation

Registered vendors can track or watch a solicitation by adding the solicitation to the *My Watchlist* page*.* To add a solicitation to this page:

1. Locate the solicitation using the search features previously explained in **Section IV**, and click the **Details** button associated with that solicitation.

2. In the upper right portion of the screen, click the **Add this item to Watch List** link:
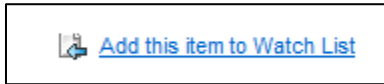
3. Immediately after clicking the link, the link will change to **Remove this item from Watch List.** To remove the item from the Watch List, click this link:
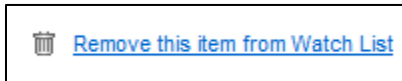
To open the *My Watchlist* page, click the **Business Opportunities** tab at the top of the page then click on the **My Watchlist** sub-tab:

Once in the page you can use the **Keyword Search** field to find a specific solicitation you are watching or use the *Show Me* links to filter the solicitations you are watching:

The following table describes how each Show Me link filters:

	Filter	What is Returned by the Filter
1	All Solicitations	This filter displays all solicitations.
2	My Commodities	This filter displays only those solicitations you are watching that contain the commodity codes you registered for.
3	Open Solicitations	This filter displays solicitations you are watching that are still open for bidding.
4	Closing Soon	This filter displays solicitations you are watching that will close in the next 10 days

VII. Printing a Solicitation

A solicitation may be printed from either of two links in the solicitation's *Details* page:

1. There is a **Print Solicitation** link in the middle of the solicitation's *Details* page, just above the Details sections:
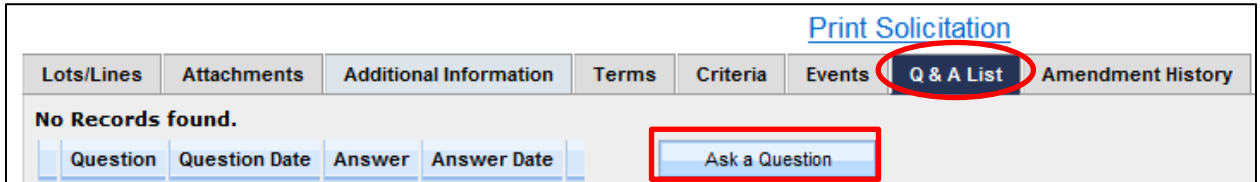

2. There is a **Print Friendly** link at the top of the solicitation's *Details* page:

VIII. Asking Questions about a Solicitation

Questions can be submitted about a solicitation while the solicitation is in Open status. There are two ways to initiate a question as shown in the following screenshots.

1. In a solicitation's *Details* page, there is a **Q&A List** section. In this section, you will see an **Ask a Question** button. Click this button to open a textbox where you can enter a question:
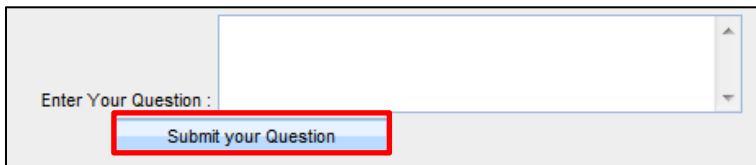
   In the **Enter Your Question** textbox, enter up to 250 alpha/numeric characters in your question. Once the **Submit your Question** button is clicked, your question will appear in the Question column along with the date the question was posted:

   After the issuer responds to the question, the answer will appear on the same line as your question along with the date the answer was posted.
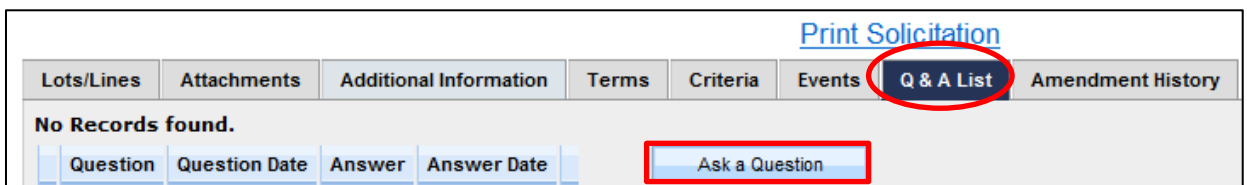
2. In a solicitation's *Details* page, there is an **Ask Issuer** link at the top of the page that opens the Q&A List section and displays the **Ask a Question** button:
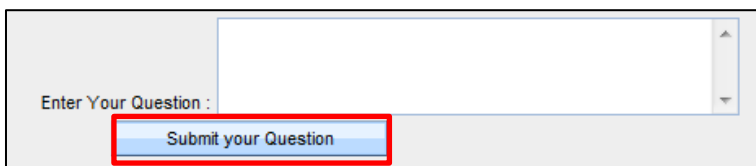
   Click the **Ask a Question** button to open the **Enter Your Question** textbox. Type your question in the textbox and then click the **Submit your Question** button:

IX. Quick Steps to Locate, Print, Track, and Ask Questions about Solicitations:

1. Log into Iowa VSS.
2. If Iowa VSS opens to the **Account Verification** page, verify your account information.
3. You will now be in the **Account Information – Summary** page. Click on the Business Opportunities tab at the top of the page. You will now be on the **Solicitations** page.
4. Enter text into the Keyword Search field at the top of the page and click the Go button.
   a. (Optional) – Click on the Advanced Search link in the Keyword Search field to open the solicitation Type, and solicitation Status drop-down menus. Click on a drop-down menu, select a filter entry then click the Go button.
5. After the specific solicitation has been found, click the Details button in the Solicitation column to open the *Details* page.
6. Review information in the *Details* page.
   a. The default section you see when the *Details* page is opened is the Lots/Lines section. Open each additional section to the right of the Lots/Lines section to review its information.
      i. In the Attachments section, open and/or download files the issuer has attached to the solicitation.
      ii. In the Q&A List section, ask a question by clicking the Ask a Question button. You may also ask a question from the Ask Issuer link at the top of the page.
7. If you want to print a copy of the solicitation, click on either the Print Solicitation or Print Friendly link in the Details page.
8. If you want to monitor the solicitation over time, click the Add this item to Watch List link near the top of the page.
   a. If you want to stop monitoring the solicitation, click the Remove this item from Watch List link near the top of the page.