

Request for Proposals

Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Federal Fisheries



Issue date: November 17, 2014

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: January 5, 2015

SECTION 1: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) TIMELINE

Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Federal Fisheries

November 17th, 2014: Request for Proposal (RFP) issued and distributed.

- Please notify PSMFC if your firm intends to respond to this RFP. Your information will be used to compile an email list so that PSMFC may notify you in the event of changes/amendments to this RFP.
- Your notification must be sent via email to contracting@psmfc.org

December 15th, 2014: Deadline for written questions regarding this RFP.

- Please email questions to contracting@psmfc.org

December 19th, 2014: Responses to written questions available on PSMFC RFP page.

- Responses to all questions will be provided to all participating parties and all those who notified PSMFC of their intent to respond.

January 5th, 2015: Proposal submission deadline.

- Only e-mailed proposals will be accepted. Submit proposals to: contracting@psmfc.org
- Faxed and hard copy proposals will not be accepted.

January 5-9, 2015: Proposal Review.

January 9th 2015: Project Finalist Selected.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Federal Fisheries

Problem Statement:

The *Economic Status of the Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska*¹ report provides a broad set of information regarding the products produced, revenues received and prices paid for groundfish species. However, the information characterizing the market fundamentals underlying observed changes in these economic indicators of the wholesale market for North Pacific fisheries products is incomplete. The markets for these products take place in a regional and global context of supply and demand. An in-depth exposition of wholesale markets and the factors influencing them is needed to provide management and the public a thorough market-oriented perspective and context for understanding the North Pacific fisheries industry.

Project Objectives:

The contractor will collaborate with Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Economic and Social Sciences Research Program (ESSRP)² and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's Alaska Fisheries Information Network (AKFIN) to develop market profiles for key species and products.³

The output of this project will be a dossier entitled *Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Groundfish* that gives qualitative and quantitative descriptions of the wholesale markets for vital North Pacific fisheries products. This product will include figures, tables, and text illustrating the current and historical status of these markets. The scope of the analysis should include global, international, regional and domestic wholesale markets to the extent they are relevant for a given product. To the extent practicable for a given product, the analysis should address: product value (revenues), quantities, prices, market share, supply chain, import/export markets, major participants in the markets, product demand, end-use, current/recent issues (e.g., certification), current/recent news, and future prospects. The analysts are not constrained to the topics previously listed and are encouraged to propose other substantive topics that might be relevant to a given wholesale product market. The section Alaska Groundfish Market Profiles of the *Economic Status of the Groundfish Fisheries Off Alaska, 2012*⁴ can serve as baseline for the content of the *Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Groundfish*. The *Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Groundfish* should extend beyond this section with up-to-date contextual information and more comprehensive analysis, where possible. The current document presents each species in a very consistent, formulaic approach but we are amenable to more variety in the presentation when more detail exists for a given species. In terms of the publishing format, we recommend you examine the *Alaska Fishing Fleet Profiles* (<http://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/resources/FleetProfiles412.pdf>) as an example of the level of professional appearance, accessibility and ease of interpretation we expect in the report.

¹ <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM/Socioeconomics/SAFE/default.php>

² <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/REFM/Socioeconomics/Default.php>

³ <http://www.akfin.org>

⁴ Section 9, <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov/refm/docs/2013/economic.pdf>

ESSRP and AKFIN hope to periodically revise and update the qualitative content of the *Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Groundfish* to reflect the current and recent changes to the wholesale market addressed in the dossier. Therefore, project deliverables will include copies of all programming code used to generate the figures, tables, and text.

Research Methods and Tasks:

The set of wholesale products or species to be addressed in this report are listed in Table 1. This set includes species, sets of species, or specific products that are vital to the North Pacific fisheries industry in the sense that they are highly valuable, have large volume, have high employment, or are critical to a sector of the North Pacific region.⁵ This list can be expanded and refined in cooperation with ESRP and AKFIN to a set that is feasible within the contract budget.

Table 1.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Alaska pollock fillets (blocks, deep-skin & other fillets) | 2) Alaska pollock surimi |
| 3) Alaska pollock roe | 4) Alaska pollock H & G and whole fish |
| 5) Pacific cod H & G and whole fish | 6) Pacific cod fillets |
| 7) International/global whitefish and relationship to AK fisheries | 8) Global fish meal, oil and other ancillary products and relationship to AK fisheries |
| 9) Pacific halibut | 10) Yellowfin sole |
| 11) Rock sole | 12) Sablefish |
| 13) Red king crab | 14) Snow crab |
| 15) Golden king crab | |

The National Marine Fisheries Service and the State of Alaska collect data on first-wholesale production and value for all processors operating within the North Pacific. These data are compiled and disseminated through ESRP and AKFIN. The contractor would have access to these confidential data for this analysis. Access to these data will terminate upon completion of the project and all confidential data will be used for the sole purpose of this project. The contractor will be required to sign a legally binding confidentiality agreement.

The first-wholesale production and value data collected and available through ESRP and AKFIN for this project are extensive. However, they are designed for management purposes and

⁵ The list of product or species markets is constrained to those directly related to the fisheries managed by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. In particular, Alaska salmon will be excluded from this analysis despite it being a highly valuable product that is vital to the region.

they sometimes cannot be cast in a framework that reflects the wholesale markets in which industry participants operate. Furthermore, external data (those not managed by ESSRP and AKFIN) will be pertinent to the analysis at many levels. The contractor will work with ESSRP and AKFIN to identify data needs. ESSRP and AKFIN will be responsible for acquiring and compiling data for the project that will be made available to the contractor. Any data purchases will not come out of the contractor budget.

ESSRP staff are comprised of trained economists that are proficient in regression, forecasting, production modeling and analysis. AKFIN staff are comprised of trained IT specialists and data scientists that are proficient in database management and data analysis. The contractor will be able to collaborate with the staff from these organizations to leverage their expertise. The contractor will have hands-on expertise and experience in wholesale markets for North Pacific fisheries products. The contractor is expected to have the relationships and contacts necessary to research the product market being analyzed. Finally, the contractor will have demonstrated experience in the writing, design and publication of high-quality documents targeted towards a public audience.

The following list broadly outlines the responsibilities of the three parties collaborating on this project:

- The contractor will collaborate with ESSRP and AKFIN to define the specific product markets, topics and scope covered in the *Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Groundfish* dossier.
- The contractor will collaborate with ESSRP and AKFIN to identify the data needs and availability.
- AKFIN will be responsible for acquiring the data and processing and delivering the data to the contractor, per the contractor specifications.
- The contractor will be responsible for analysis of the data and will be able to leverage the analytical expertise of ESSRP and AKFIN to the extent practicable.
- The contractor will meet with to industry and market participants for research.
- The contractor will be responsible for writing the report.
- The contractor will be responsible for designing graphics for the report.
- The contractor will be responsible for the design and layout of the report.
- The contractor will be responsible for the delivery of drafts and the final report to ESSRP and AKFIN.
- ESSRP will be responsible for subsequent re-prints of the report.

Further refinement or clarification of responsibilities that are necessary to complete the bid for this contract can be negotiated by contacting contracting@psmfc.org, and should be included as part of the bid.

Timeline and Deliverables:

January 2015: Finalize contract with contractor and define a more details project timeline.

January 2015: Contractor to begin project.

February 5, 2015: Contractor to provide Progress Report. Feedback from AKFIN and ESSRP will be received by the contractor within 2 weeks.

April 2, 2015: Contractor to provide Progress Report. Feedback from AKFIN and ESSRP will be received by the contractor within 2 weeks.

June 4, 2015: Contractor to provide Progress Report. Feedback from AKFIN and ESSRP will be received by the contractor within 2 weeks.

August 6, 2015: First (rough) draft report delivered. Review from AKFIN and ESSRP will be received by the contractor within 2 weeks.

October 1, 2015: Second draft report delivered. Review from AKFIN and ESSRP will be received by the contractor within 2 weeks.

November 5, 2015: Final report to be completed and delivered.

The timeline is negotiable but target dates for review of progress should be identified in the contract.

Questions

Questions regarding this RFP shall be submitted in writing no later than December 15, 2014 to contracting@psmfc.org.

Interested Vendors List

If your organization might be interested in submitting a proposal, please send an email by December 15, 2014 to contracting@psmfc.org, notifying PSMFC that you would like to be added to the interested vendors list. Please include the title of this RFP (Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Federal Fisheries) in the subject line of your email. Your “reply to” address will be added to an email list to notify you of any changes to this RFP.

Amendments to Solicitations

If this solicitation is amended, all terms and conditions that are not amended remain unchanged. Proposers shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to this solicitation in Proposer’s cover letter.

Submission, Modification Revision, and Withdrawl of Proposals

- The Deadline for proposals is January 5, 2015
- An electronic copy of the proposal must be submitted to contracting@psmfc.org:
- Proposals and modifications to proposals may be submitted via electronic copy in PDF or MS Word format.
- PSMFC reserves the right to consult with and to consider information from its own sources, including information from state and federal agencies regarding the proposer’s prior performance or the status of outstanding investigations or warrants involving the proposer.
- Proposers are responsible for submitting proposals, and any modification of revisions, so as to reach PSMFC by 4:00 p.m., local time, on January 5, 2015.

Late proposals

Any proposal, modification, or revision at the PSMFC office designated in the solicitation after the exact time specified for receipt to offers is “late” and will not be considered unless it is received before award is made, the PSMFC Fiscal Manager determines that accepting the late offer would not unduly delay the acquisition; and

There is acceptable evidence to establish that it was received at the PSMFC installation designation for receipt of offers and was under the PSMFC’s control prior to the time set for receipt to offers; or

It is the only proposal received.

However, a late modification of an otherwise successful proposal that makes its terms more favorable to the PSMFC, will be considered at any time it is received and may be accepted.

Acceptable evidence to establish time of receipt at the PSMFC installation includes the time/date stamp of that installation on the proposal wrapper, other documentary evidence of receipt maintained by the installation, or oral testimony or statements of PSMFC personnel.

If an emergency or unanticipated event interrupts normal PSMFC processes so that proposals cannot be received at the office designated for receipt of proposals by the exact time specified in the solicitation, and urgent PSMFC requirements preclude amendment of the solicitation, the time specified for receipt of proposals will be deemed to be extended to the same time of day specified in the solicitation on the first work day on which normal PSMFC processes resume.

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice received at any time before award. Proposals may be withdrawn in person by an offer or an authorized representative, if the identity of the person requesting withdrawal is established and the person signs a receipt for the proposal before award.

Proposers shall submit proposals in response to this solicitation in English and in U.S. dollars.

Proposers may submit modifications to their proposals at any time before the solicitation closing date and time, and may submit modifications in response to an amendment, or to correct a mistake at any time before award.

Proposers may submit revised proposals only if requested or allowed by PSMFC.

Proposals may be withdrawn at any time before award. Withdrawals are effective upon receipt of notice by the Fiscal Manager.

Each Proposal must state that it is a firm offer which may be accepted within a period of ninety (90) days. Although the contract is expected to be awarded prior to that time, the ninety day period is requested in order to allow for unforeseeable delays.

Proposer shall submit the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with the authority to bind the firm, as well as to answer questions or provide clarification concerning the firm's proposal.

PSMFC is not liable for any costs incurred by vendors/contractors in developing or submitting their response to this RFP.

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND CONTENT

Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the vendor's ability to meet the requirements of the work outlined in this RFP.

Proposals may be submitted as an electronic file attached to an email message and sent to contracting@psmfc.org with the following inserted in the "subject" line of the email: "Wholesale Market Profiles for Alaska Federal Fisheries RFP". Emailed proposals must be received by the specified deadline according to the internal clock of PSMFC's servers.

Proposers should use the following outline in organizing the content of their proposals:

- Cover Letter

The letter of transmittal shall, at a minimum, contain the following:

- Identification of the Proposer, including business name, address, and telephone number;
 - Name, title, address, telephone number, fax number, and email address of a contact person during the period of proposal evaluation;
 - A statement that the proposal shall remain valid for a period not fewer than ninety (90) days from the due date of proposals;
 - Identification of any information contained in the proposal that the Proposer deems to be, and establishes as, confidential or proprietary and wishes to be withheld from disclosure to others under the US Freedom of Information Act. A blanket statement that all contents of the proposal are confidential or proprietary will not be honored by PSMFC); and
 - The signature and typed name of the person authorized to bind the offering firm to the terms of the proposal
- Table of Contents

Insert a complete table of contents for material included in the proposal, including page numbers.

- **Qualifications, Related Experience and References**

Overview: This section should establish the ability of the Proposer to satisfactorily perform the work described in this RFP by reasons of: demonstrated competence in the services to be provided; the nature and relevance of similar work currently being performed or recently completed; record of meeting schedules and deadlines of other clients; competitive advantages over other firms in the same industry; strength and stability as a business concern; and supportive client references. Information should be furnished for both the Proposer and any subcontractors included in the offer.

Furnish background information about your firm, including date of founding, legal form (i.e. sole proprietorship, LLC, corporation/state of incorporation), number and location of offices, principle lines of business, number of employees, day/hours of operation and other pertinent data. Disclose any conditions (e.g. bankruptcy or other financial problems, pending litigation, planned office closures, impending mergers) that may affect the Proposer's ability to perform in accordance with a resulting contract. Certify that the firm is not debarred, suspended or otherwise declared ineligible to contract by any federal, state, or local public agency.

Describe your firm's most noteworthy qualifications for providing the required services to PSMFC, including years of experience providing like services. Specifically highlight those qualifications that distinguish you from others.

Identify at least three (3) former clients that PSMFC may contact as references and who can independently evaluate the Proposer's expertise in this area. Describe the work performed for the client and include the name, job title, address, and phone number of a contact person for each reference.

Describe other lines of business in which your firm is engaged.

If your organization is a subsidiary or division of a parent firm, provide similar background information on the parent company and identify any other affiliated companies.

Disclose any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the scope of work required by PSMFC and your firm's other business activity.

- Work Plan / Technical Approach

This section should demonstrate the Proposer's understanding of PSMFC's objectives and requirements, demonstrate the proposer's ability to meet those requirements and outline clearly and concisely the plan for accomplishing the specified work.

Describe succinctly how your firm would accomplish the work and satisfy PSMFC's objectives as described in this RFP.

- Cost

This section should disclose all charges that will be assessed to PSMFC as a result of the services provided by Proposer.

Quote an estimated total fee and total hourly fees for completing all requirements outlined in the Scope of Work.

Quote rates for additional, optional consulting hours that may be required for special projects/consulting work.

State your preference for how payments should be made (e.g. monthly, quarterly, semi-annually).

For all fees listed above, provide quotes for the initial term. The total fees shall include all expenses and costs, including direct labor, supplies, travel, indirect costs and profit.

- Exceptions / Deviations

State any exceptions or deviations from the requirements stated in this RFP. If your firm wishes to present alternative approaches to meet PSMFC's work requirements, these should be thoroughly explained.

- Appendices

Furnish as appendices supporting documents requested in the preceding instructions.

Include any additional information you deem essential to proper evaluation of your proposal and which is not solicited in any of the preceding sections.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

General. All proposals received in accordance with these RFP instructions will be evaluated to determine if they are complete and meet the requirements specified in this

RFP. An award will be made to the Proposer whose offer is judged to be the most advantageous to PSMFC.

PSMFC expressly reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and make no award under this RFP, or to negotiate separately with competing vendors.

Process. All Proposals received in accordance with these RFP instructions will be reviewed, analyzed, evaluated and scored in accordance with the criteria described below. If needed, additional information may be requested from one or more Proposers. Interviews will be conducted with the top scoring Proposers. Following the initial interview, review will be conducted by PSMFC Staff. Selections will then be made for a second round of interviews.

Request for additional information. During the evaluation period, PSMFC may request additional information in order to fairly evaluate a Proposer's offer. If such information is required, the Proposer will be notified in writing (or by email) and will be permitted a reasonable period of time to respond.

Evaluation Criteria. By use of numerical and narrative scoring techniques, proposals will be evaluated by PSMFC against the factors specified below. The relative weights of the criteria –based on a 100 point scale – are shown in parentheses. Within each evaluation criterion listed, the sub-criteria are those described in the section entitled, "Proposal Format and Content". The evaluation criteria are:

- Experience in wholesale markets for Alaska groundfish products (40%).
- Experience in document production and writing for public audiences (25%)
- Experience summarizing complex quantitative information (20%)
- Project cost (15%)

CONTRACT AWARD

All qualified proposals will be evaluated and an award will be made to the firm whose combination of cost and technical offers is deemed to be in the best interest of PSMFC.

The PSMFC may reject any or all of the proposals if such action is in the PSMFC's interest.

The PSMFC may waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received.

The PSMFC reserves the right to make an award on any item for a quantity less than a quantity offered, at the unit cost or price offered, unless the offer specifies otherwise in the proposal.

The PSMFC reserves the right to make multiple awards if, after considering the additional administrative cost, it is in the PSMFC's best interest to do so.

Exchanges with proposers after receipt of a proposal do not constitute a rejection or counteroffer by the PSMFC.

The PSMFC may determine that a proposal is unacceptable if the prices proposed are materially unbalanced between line items or subline items. Unbalanced prices exist when, despite an acceptable total evaluated price, the price of one or more contract line items is significantly overstated or understated as indicated by the application of cost or price analysis techniques. A proposal may be rejected if the PSMFC Fiscal Manager determines that the lack of balances poses an unacceptable risk to the PSMFC.

If a cost realism analysis is performed, cost realism may be considered by the source selection authority in evaluating performance or schedule risk.

The PSMFC may disclose the following information in post award debriefings to other proposers:

The overall evaluated cost of price and technical rating of the successful proposer;

The overall ranking of all proposers, when any ranking was developed by the agency during source selection; and

A summary of the rationale for award.

SPECIAL CONTRACT AWARD REQUIREMENTS

Conflict of Interest

The Proposer warrants that, to the best of the Proposer's knowledge and belief, there are no relevant facts or circumstances which could give rise to an organizational conflict of interest, as defined in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Subpart 9.5, or that the Proposer has disclosed all such relevant information.

The Proposer agrees that if an actual or potential organizational conflict of interest is discovered after award, the Proposer will make full disclosure in writing to the PSMFC Fiscal Manager. This disclosure shall include a description of actions that the Proposer has taken or proposes to take, after consultation with the PSMFC Fiscal Manager, to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the actual or potential conflict.

Remedies – The PSMFC Fiscal Manager may terminate the contract for convenience, in whole or in part, if it deems such termination necessary to avoid an organizational conflict of interest. If the Proposer was aware of a potential organizational conflict of interest prior to award or discovered an actual or potential conflict after award and did not disclose or misrepresented relevant information to the PSMFC Fiscal Manager, PSMFC may terminate the contract for default, debar the Proposer from PSMFC contracting, or pursue such other remedies as may be permitted by law.

The Proposer further agrees to insert provisions that shall conform substantially to the language of this clause, including this paragraph, in any subcontract, personnel agreement, or consultant agreement hereunder.

Indemnification

Contractor shall indemnify and hold harmless PSMFC and its officers, agents, employees, boards and commissions, against any and all loss, damages, liability, claims, suits, costs and expense whatsoever, including reasonable attorneys fees, regardless of the merits or outcome of any such claim or suit arising from or in any manner connected to Proposer's negligent performance of services provided or work conducted as a result of this RFP.

Insurance

Examples of Minimum Coverages Required. The Contractor selected for this project will be required to present evidence to show, at a minimum, the amounts of insurance coverage indicated below.

Contractor is also responsible for any Subcontractors maintaining sufficient limits of the same coverage required by Contractor and the Contractor is responsible for collecting Certificates of subcontractors, as per below:

- Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability –All employers, including Contractor, that employ subject workers who work under this contract shall comply with State Worker's Compensation laws applicable to the State where the work is performed. Contractor shall ensure that each of its sub-contractors complies with these requirements. Not required for sole proprietors.
- If travel by automobile is required, Contractor shall obtain at Contractor's expense, and keep in effect during the term of this Contract, Commercial Business Automobile Liability Insurance covering all owned, non-owned, or hired vehicles. This coverage may be written in combination with the Commercial General Liability Insurance (with separate limits). Combined single limit per occurrence shall not be less than \$ 500,000. Use of personal automobile insurance instead of commercial business automobile insurance may be substituted for sole proprietorships. Note: The sole proprietor must either carry a Business Use Endorsement or insure that business use is covered under their personal auto policy.
- Commercial General Liability Insurance covering all operations by or on behalf of the Contractor, on an occurrence basis, against claims for personal injury (including bodily injury and death) and property damage (including loss of use). Combined single limit per occurrence shall not be less than \$ 500,000.

Subrogation Waiver Provision. Contractor agrees that in the event of loss due to any of the perils for which Contractor is required to provide or perils insured under State Act

Workers' Compensation or Commercial Business Automobile Liability Insurance, Contractor shall look solely to its insurance for recovery. Contractor shall hereby grant to PSMFC, its officers, agents, employees, boards, commissions, on behalf of any insurer providing Business Auto Liability, State Act Workers' Compensation, or equivalent Policy coverage to either Contractor or PSMFC with respects to the services of Contractor herein, a waiver of any right to subrogate which any such insurer of said contractor may acquire against PSMFC, its officers, agents, employees, boards, and commissions by virtue of the payment of any loss under such insurances.

Evidence of Insurance Provision. Before the final execution of this contract, Contractor and any Subcontractors shall produce a standard Accord form Certificates of Insurance with Insurance Carriers acceptable to the PSMFC, evidencing all required insurances. The Certificate shall also comply with the Additional Insured Provision, Subrogation Waiver Provision and forward actual endorsements from the Contractor's insurance carriers evidencing required coverage amendments.

Renewal/Cancellation. The respective Insurance Carriers and the Certificate of Insurance shall allow for a minimum of 30 day written notice of cancellation, nonrenewal or reduction of required coverages before the expiration date thereof and the Certificate shall delete the word(s) "endeavor" and the last two lines of a standard Accord Certificate ("But failure to mail such notice shall impose no obligation or liability of any kind upon the company, its agents or representatives"). Renewal Certificates evidencing the same shall be received 10 days prior to the expiration of the coverages so evidenced. The Certificate evidencing all requirements herein and any reduction of required coverages or cancellation shall be sent to PSMFC Attn: Rick Masters, 205 SE Spokane Suite 100, Portland, OR 97202. Upon request, Contractor shall furnish PSMFC or the appointed Broker the same evidence of insurance for its subcontractors as PSMFC requires of the Contractor.

Approval of the insurances evidenced or the Accord Certificate by PSMFC shall not relieve or decrease the extent to which the Contractor or subcontractor of any tier may be held responsible for payment or any and all damages resulting from its operations. Contractor shall be responsible for all losses not covered by the policy irrespective of no Certificates Filed, expired Certificates, Approved Certificates or for any reason whatsoever.

Sufficiency of Insurance. The insurance limits or coverages required by PSMFC are not represented as being sufficient to fully protect the Contractor. Contractor is advised and responsible to determine its own adequate coverage or limits for the Contractor/subcontractor.

Qualifications. Insurance companies shall be legally authorized to engage in the business of furnishing insurance in the State of the exposure. All insurance companies shall have a current A.M. Best Rating not less than "A-" and shall be satisfactory to PSMFC.

Modify Insurance Requirements. PSMFC reserves the option, at any time, to require additional Insurance to be provided by Contractor or subcontractor or to otherwise revise the requirements for provided insurance. Any such action shall be deemed a directed change entitling the Contractor/Subcontractor to an increase for the costs incurred due to such change. Contractor/Subcontractor shall provide all such information or records as may be required or helpful in determining additional costs.

If Contractor cannot meet the insurance terms/condition herein, would like to exclude the insurance costs from their bid, and would like to employ the use of direct brokerage services, Contractor may request PSMFC to assign an insurance broker that is ready to meet the insurance requirements herein. The appointment of an insurance broker shall not relieve Contractor of any duties or liabilities under the contract.