



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
PROGRAM EXECUTIVE OFFICE
SIMULATION, TRAINING AND INSTRUMENTATION
12350 RESEARCH PARKWAY
ORLANDO, FLORIDA 32826-3276

**Top 20 Government Recommendations to Industry on Preparing a
Proposal for Best Value Trade-Off**

By
PEO-STRI Source Selection Advisory Team (SSAT)
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1. Recommend a quality review of the entire proposal to ensure solicitation requirements are met. Consider having an evaluation team provide a detailed overview of the entire proposal to ensure proposal is in accordance with Section L (Instructions to Offerors) and Section M (Evaluation Criteria). This will allow the team to potentially catch mistakes that may render the proposal noncompliant and/or help evaluate the proposal against meeting or exceeding the Government's requirements.
2. Ensure that the team writing the proposal leverages effective communications with the Government (see Acquisition Instruction AI-016, "Communications with Industry"). Ask the questions necessary to obtain an appropriate understanding of a draft or final solicitation and clarify all potential concerns during Industry Days, pre-solicitation conferences, face-to-face meetings, site visits, etc.
3. Ensure that your cost proposal aligns appropriately with the technical requirements as well as the Contract Line Item Number (CLIN) structure.
4. Ensure that your proposal content aligns with Section L (Instructions to Offerors) and is in compliance with all contract sections. Focus in on and have a good understanding of Section M (Evaluation Criteria) and associated requirements that will be used to assess the proposal content.
5. Proposal language should be concise and specific, and should avoid ambiguous language (e.g. "intend", "desire"). Specifically identify proposal content that meets or exceed/s the requirement/s and state which requirement/s is/are applicable in accordance with Section M (Evaluation Criteria). Provide substantive data (performance analysis, tables, methods used to derive performance or management data, etc.).
6. Ensure that proposal content includes substantive data for the Government to assess the feasibility and affordability of your approach.

Consider the risks associated with proposed approaches or innovative approaches and provide mitigation strategies for cost, schedule, and performance risks as it relates to the evaluation criteria for the specific solicitation. For example, demonstrate proposed technology maturity and how it's been used (exercise, test event, customer use) or how will it be used (intended operating environment).

7. Ensure traceability of proposal content (using a cross reference matrix) to the solicitation requirements and Section L (Instructions to Offerors) and Section M (Evaluation Criteria). Check the proposal, minimizing redundancy of information across the different sections. Create a standard way to reference the evaluation criteria and associated requirements with the related proposal page number, paragraph number, etc.

8. Keep proposal up-to-date with all Government amendments to the solicitation. Ensure that when Technical or Management volumes are changed, the Cost/Price volume reflects the change, if appropriate.

9. To the maximum extent possible, ensure that those developing the proposal are your Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and advisors most familiar with the solicitation requirements. Each team member should gain a comprehensive understanding of the Government program -- especially the cost team. Your team will ensure that capability and/or performance features deemed important by the end-user are reflected accurately in the proposal and that all dependencies within the proposal are associated with and referenced within the different areas of the proposal. Use a technical SME to review the proposed cost volume to ensure it aligns with the proposed approach in addressing the requirements.

10. Ensure that all proprietary approaches consider the Government's minimum requirements concerning technical data rights and rights in computer software and specific terms stated within the solicitation.

11. Ensure that Basis of Estimates (cost proposal) tie to Pricing Models.

12. Ensure that Pricing Models are tied to clins in Section B.

13. Proof read the cost and other volumes. One of the most significant errors encountered in the cost volume are "cut and paste" errors (reuse of inappropriate data or erroneous formulas).

14. Ensure that the Excel spreadsheets provided in support of the cost volume are editable, executable, contain no hidden cells, contain no

unusual coding and are linked so they can be easily reviewed by the Government.

15. Ensure that formulas used in the cost volume point to the correct rate tables.

16. Even though your business may not be subject to Government Cost Accounting Standards, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) does not allow a number of business expenses. Refer to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to assure that you are not building them into your cost proposal.

17. Often times, the solicitation states that the proposal will be evaluated in accordance with FAR 15.404-1 which delineates various proposal analysis techniques to evaluate the reasonableness of your proposed price, to include unbalanced pricing. Ensure that you review and understand the applicable methods in preparing your proposal.

18. If the solicitation contains other than Firm-Fixed-Price (FFP) CLINs, then your company must have an adequate accounting system (FAR 16.104). Even though your company can not generally request a review from the Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA), you can review requirements for an adequate system on line, and be prepared when the Government initiates a request for a Preaward Survey of Prospective Contractor Accounting Systems to DCAA. The Small Business office can also offer assistance to small businesses in assessing the suitability of their finance and accounting systems.

19. FAR Part 9 requires that contracts be awarded to responsible contractors. When the Government utilizes the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) to assist in developing this determination, be responsive to DCMA requests and make them aware of available lines of credit. If, upon review, you realize that your ratios do not look good or you are asset poor, Guarantee/Warranty agreements can bolster your ratings if issued by a financially strong company or individual. Also, if your company has acquired another firm that deals with the Government, be aware of DCMA Form 1620 entitled "Guaranty Agreement for Corporate Guarantors" and its requirements.

20. Stay within the page count as required in the solicitation. Any pages provided in excess of the page count will not be evaluated in accordance with solicitation requirements.