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**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548**

**FILE:** B-189223

**DATE:** March 27, 1978

**MATTER OF:** Computer Sciences Corporation

**DIGEST:**

1. RFP gave some indication, albeit in less than precise terms, of greater importance of "experience" over "education" in evaluation of proposed "key personnel." Conclusion is prompted, in part, by RFP's provision allowing offeror to substitute experience for education and stressing importance of sufficiently varied and lengthy work experience. Greater narrative attention in RFP was also paid to experience.
2. Protester's concern has not taken issue with Navy's calculation showing that, if weight is accorded subcriteria in manner protester assumed it would be, selected concern's first-ranked position is not affected.
3. It is unreasonable to assume that proposals will be scored equally when one possesses merit beyond minimum requirements specified in negotiated procurement subject to numerical scoring analysis.
4. Nothing inconsistent is seen in decision to accord greater merit in education area only on basis of employee's possession of one bachelor's degree or one master's degree. To this extent, greater merit was accorded to superior education in same manner as superior experience was rewarded.

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5. Protesting concern's lower-priced proposal was accorded proportionally correct merit for pricing advantage contained in proposal. Notwithstanding merit assigned, slightly higher-scored, higher-priced proposal was properly selected.

Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) has protested the award of contract N00189-77-D-0337 to System Development Corporation (SDC) for a 1-year term, with options for 2 additional years. Essentially, CSC questions the Navy's evaluation of the offerors' proposed "key personnel" for the work and the Navy's related judgment that SDC's slightly higher-scored, higher-priced proposal merited selection over CSC's slightly lower-scored, lower-priced proposal. We cannot question the award for the reasons set forth below.

The contract was awarded under request for proposals (RFP) N00189-76-R-0354, issued by the Regional Procurement Department, Naval Supply Center, Norfolk, Virginia (NSC), in late 1976 for "computer software maintenance and support services for various land and sea locations" on an "indefinite quantity, labor hour" basis. The work to be procured was described in 13 separately identified "projects."

The RFP directed interested offerors to submit "separately a price proposal and technical proposals." Additional directions as to the content of technical proposals were set forth elsewhere in the RFP. Briefly, offerors were required to submit resumes of key personnel (eight job titles were identified in the RFP as being "key" from program analyst to program manager), to furnish "model job orders," to describe company experience, and to "indicate the technical approach to each task."

Under clause C111, Personnel Qualifications, offerors were given a further explanation as to the required characteristics of both key and non-key employees. The clause read:

"(a) \* \* \* The work history of each Contractor employee must contain experiences directly related to the tasks and functions he is intended to perform prior to performing services under this contract. Further, these prior work experiences must be of sufficient variety and duration that the employee is able to effectively and efficiently perform the tasks and functions he will be assigned. The Commanding Officer reserves the right to determine if a given work history contains necessary and sufficient directly related experiences to reasonably ensure the ability for effective and efficient performance. \* \* \*

"(b) For experiences to be recognized and counted toward satisfying labor category requirements, it must be experience from one or more of the following areas in descending order of their relative importance. EXTENSIVE Experience in these areas may be offered as SUBSTITUTION for degree requirements on an individual case basis." (There followed a list of 30 work experience areas in a descending order of relative importance.)

Paragraph (c) of clause C11 set forth "minimum education and experience requirements" for key and non-key personnel. As to the key position of "Program Manager," for example, the clause read:

"Program Manager

- (a) Function. Responsible for the technical and administrative management of the entire contractor organization.
- (b) Education. A Bachelor's Degree in computer science, engineering, mathematics, physics, or an associated field. An advanced degree is preferred.
- (c) Experience. Ten years."

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"Evaluation and Award Factors" were also set forth in the RFP as follows:

- "1. The relative importance of factors to be evaluated will be as follows:
  - a. Key personnel and model job orders will share equal weight and comprise approximately 80% of the technical score.
  - b. Company experience will comprise approximately 20% of the technical score.
- "2. The ratio of technical to cost will be about 75:25.
- "3. Prices of option year requirements will not be considered in the evaluation for award."

SDC and CSC submitted technical and price proposals. The contested evaluation of "key personnel" was specifically arrived at, so the Navy reports, as follows:

" \* \* \* Section C102 of the RFP requested the submission of 101 resumes covering eight of the 19 labor categories set forth in the schedule for which prices were requested. These resumes were used to evaluate the sub-criteria of key personnel in the areas of education and experience. \* \* \* each resume was evaluated in terms of experience in the particular areas listed in the RFP and weighted in descending order of importance and in the area of education. \* \* \* No other factors were used to evaluate the sub-criteria of key personnel. A relative scoring method was employed to evaluate both experience and education. Point scores of 1 to 30 were applied to the experience areas in accordance with the descending order listed

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in the RFP and multiplied by the number of years experience in each of the thirty areas of experience. Education was evaluated on a scale of 0 to 100 for less than a high school education to an advanced degree. Each evaluator evaluated each resume in both areas (education and experience) and the total scores were then averaged \*\*\* by dividing the total scores by the number of evaluators, i.e., 3. Education \*\*\* was then divided by 101 (the number of resumes evaluated). The experience scores were then converted to a 0 to 100 scale with the following results:

	<u>Experience</u>	<u>Education</u>
"CSC	61.75	72.77
"SDC	100.0	54.39

\*\*\* These scores were then weighted 70% for experience and 30% for education and added for the evaluated score of the sub-criteria of key personnel with the following results:

	<u>Key Personnel</u>
"CSC	65.06
"SDC	86.32"

The final ranking of proposals, including cost,\* was as follows:

	<u>Technical</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
SDC	75	22.25	97.25
CSC	66.75	25	91.75

This evaluation prompted SDC'S selection.

\*CSC's final price was about 12 percent less than SDC's proposed price.

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CSC's grounds of protest may be summarized under the following paragraphs.

(1) The RFP failed to disclose the relative worth of the experience "subcriterion"; consequently, under GAO precedent, SDC was entitled to assume "experience" and "education" of key personnel were approximately equal. The company based its proposal on its assumption that "experience" and "education" were of equal weight. As shown by the Navy's evaluation, however, CSC's reasonable assumption was contradicted to CSC's prejudice by an evaluation which made "experience" worth twice as much as education. Had CSC known the true importance of experience it would have proposed a more-experienced, higher-salaried mix of employees.

(2) Alternatively, the RFP was deficient for failing to disclose the relative importance of such "essential characteristics" as education and experience.

(3) The "minimum" education and experience levels reasonably indicated that perfect scores would be assigned proposals meeting the minimum levels. Since CSC's proposal "equalled or exceeded" the education and experience requirements, it should have received at least as high a score as SDC received in the key personnel area.

(4) It was improper for the Navy to score experience "linearly" (that is, an employee with twice the years of experience of another employee received twice the score assigned to the other employee) when it did not so score education. In fact, it was improper for the Navy not to credit an employee who possessed more than one bachelor's or master's degree or not to give credit for degrees at the doctorate level.

(5) CSC's low price was not given proper weight in the evaluation process. Alternatively, given the closeness of scores, award could have properly been made to CSC in recognition of its lower-priced offer notwithstanding its slightly lower score.

(6) The scoring of experience did not take into account the quality of that experience.

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The Navy's position on these grounds of protest (keyed to the above-numbered paragraphs) is:

(1) & (2) Considering the subject RFP as a whole with the extensive listing of 30 categories of experience, the emphasis in section C111 of the RFP on experience, and the condition of substituting extensive experience for formal education, combined with the detailed listing of evaluation criteria, the RFP reasonably conveyed the greater importance of extensive experience over education. Moreover, since the subcriteria of education and experience were "definitively descriptive" under GAO precedent, CSC should not have assumed the subcriteria were of equal worth. In any event, a recalculation of scores under education and experience shows that SDC is still ahead on points even if education and experience are equally weighted. Final recalculated scores: SDC-97.25, CSC-93.58.

(3) & (4) It was contrary to GAO precedent and the sense of the RFP for CSC to have assumed that meeting the minimum experience requirements would necessarily require the Navy to assign CSC "perfect scores." The ranking of experience in descending order clearly implied a "linear" approach to the scoring of experience; moreover, contrary to CSC's impression, education beyond the minimum degree specified was accorded a higher score.

(5) CSC's low price was given the appropriate consideration in the scoring process; it remains the position of the Navy that the scoring differential between the offerors justifies award at the higher SDC price especially since the overall cost of the contract will be determined by the efficiency of personnel notwithstanding that the contractor's hourly labor rates are fixed.

(6) Scoring did take into account quality of experience (implicit in the Navy position).

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### ANALYSIS

(Keyed to the above-numbered paragraphs.)

(1) & (2) Contrary to CSC's position, we find that the RFP gave some indication--albeit in less than precise terms--of the greater importance of experience over education. In so concluding, we accept the argument that clause C11--in speaking of the right of an offeror to substitute experience for education and stressing the importance of sufficiently varied and lengthy work experience--gave some indication of the greater weight of experience notwithstanding the fact that experience was listed as the last item in the position description of each key position. Because of the greater narrative attention given to experience in the RFP, we think it was unreasonable for CSC to have assumed that experience and education would be equally weighted notwithstanding that, for format purposes, experience was listed below education in each position description. Moreover, CSC has not taken issue with the Navy's calculations that--giving equal weight to education and experience as CSC says it assumed would be the case--SDC's proposal is still rated highest.

(3) It is unreasonable to assume that proposals will be scored equally when one possesses merit beyond the minimum requirements specified in a negotiated procurement subject to numerical scoring analysis. See Automated Systems, Inc., B-184835, February 23, 1976, 76-1 CPD 124. Consequently, we reject CSC's assertion that it rightfully assumed it would achieve "perfect scores" merely because it met specified minimums.

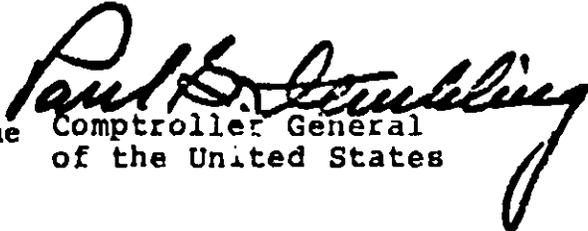
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(4) We see nothing in the RFP that should have led an offeror to believe that greater experience would not lead to greater point scores. Further, we see nothing inconsistent in the Navy's decision to accord greater merit in the education area only on the basis of one bachelor's degree or one master's degree. To this extent, greater merit was accorded to an individual's educational achievements in the same manner greater experience was given greater merit. Moreover, we cannot disagree with the exercised discretion of the procuring agency not to accord greater merit based on an individual's possession of more than one bachelor's or master's degree. This latter decision obviously reflects the Navy's considered judgment that the requirements involved in this particular procurement are ones as to which an employee's possession of more than one degree at each educational level would be superfluous. We cannot question this judgment or the related judgment not to accord merit to doctorate holders given the requirements involved.

(5) We have no basis to question Navy's view that CSC's proposal was properly accorded proportionally correct merit for the pricing advantage contained in its proposal. Further, we have no basis to question the judgment that the merit of SDC's proposal was worth the pricing premium involved. See Tracor-Jitco, Inc., 54 Comp. Gen. 896, 898 (1975), 75-1 CPD 253.

(6) We find nothing in the record to suggest that the Navy's evaluation of the quality of experience of proposed key employees was incorrect.

Protest denied.

  
For the Comptroller General  
of the United States