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DECISION



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

FILE:B-199159.2

DATE: June 17, 1981

MATTER OF: Essex Electro Engineers, Inc.

DIGEST:

Where record indicates that specification drawings provided bidders on microfiche cards are legible and reproducible at least on dry type copier, fact that protester may not be able to reproduce drawings on its wet type copier does not require agency to extend bid opening or cancel solicitation to give protester more time to solicit sub-contract bids.

Essex Electro Engineers, Inc. protests the refusal by the Army Support Material Readiness Command to extend the bid opening date under IFB DAAJ09-80-B-5060. Essex contends that portions of drawings contained on microfiche cards it received as part of the solicitation package could not be read or reproduced and requests that the procurement be canceled and resolicited. The protest is denied.

The Army issued the solicitation for generator sets to 15 prospective bidders on April 30, 1980. The drawings included as part of the solicitation were contained on more than 1000 microfiche cards. Essex informed the Army by letter of May 14 that it found 250 of the cards to be illegible. The Army immediately supplied a second set of cards to Essex. Essex subsequently informed the Army that it was having similar difficulty with the second set of cards.

On June 2, the Army issued an amendment to the IFB which changed the solicitation from a multi-year procurement to a single year requirement with multiple options. To accommodate this change, the amendment also extended bid opening date from June 3 to July 1.

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On June 9, Essex again informed the contracting officer that the second set of cards was as illegible as the first and requested a third set. The contracting officer obtained a third set and examined it to ascertain its legibility. On June 11, the Army offered to send Essex the third set. The Army also informed Essex that no other firm had complained of the quality of the cards. Essex responded that it would contact the contracting officer if it desired the third set. Nothing was heard from Essex until June 24, when Essex orally requested an extension of the bid opening date to give it time to obtain written quotes from its suppliers. At that time the Army suggested that Essex' difficulties might be due to the use of a wet rather than a dry copier. The Army's denial of the request precipitated this protest.

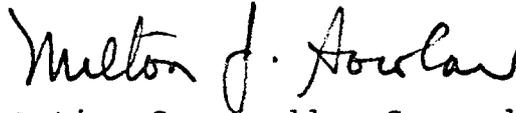
Essex contends that the Army's failure to provide legible cards from which reproductions could be made prevented it from obtaining timely quotations from subcontractors and, thus, from submitting a bid prior to the bid opening date. Essex also argues that since bidders were forced to decipher and guess at the illegible specifications, the bids may be based upon different and erroneous interpretations and are, therefore, not comparable. Hence, Essex requests that the IFB be canceled and the procurement resolicited.

The Army has submitted a number of reproductions which it made from the cards that Essex found to be illegible. Those reproductions which were made on a dry copier are excellent in clarity, contrast and legibility, while the quality of the reproductions the Army produced on a wet copier is poor. Thus, it appears that the Army's suggestion regarding Essex's use of a wet copier may have validity. In this respect, we do not believe it is incumbent upon the Government to supply microfilm drawings which are reproducible on every type and quality of copier. A procuring activity need only supply specifications and drawings from which the prospective bidder can, after examination, determine the Government's requirements. Indeed, where the specifications or drawings are voluminous, as is arguably the case here, the procuring agency need merely provide a location for examination

of the specifications or drawings, rather than distribute an individual copy to each prospective bidder. Defense Acquisition Regulation § 1.1002.2 (DAC 76-19, July 27, 1979).

Essex suggests that we base any determination concerning the legibility of the cards upon an examination of the cards themselves, rather than upon reproductions made from the cards. However, since the Army advises that the reproductions were made from the cards sent to Essex, and since we find the reproductions to be clear, we see no need to do so.

The protest is denied.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Milton J. Aoulan".

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States