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DECISION



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

FILE: B-202811

DATE: February 17, 1982

MATTER OF: CompuServe Data Systems, Inc.

DIGEST:

Proposal to furnish teleprocessing services to be provided under the General Services Administration's Teleprocessing Service Program was improperly rejected where system offered met mandatory technical specifications. Protest is sustained and recommendation is made that the options under the contract not be exercised and the requirement be resolicited.

CompuServe Data Systems, Inc. (CompuServe), protests the technical disqualification of its proposal submitted pursuant to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's request for information, solicitation control No. SI-PRO-41/S. The request was for teleprocessing services to be provided under the General Services Administration's (GSA) Teleprocessing Service Program (TSP) Multiple-Award Schedule Contract (MASC) No. GS-00C-F1018, to support the John F. Kennedy Space Center. Twenty-six firms received the solicitation, with five firms submitting a proposal. After its review, NASA found that only The Service Bureau Company met all of the mandatory requirements. A contract was awarded on February 13, 1981, with two 1-year options. Service was commenced on March 1, 1981, and was to continue until February 28, 1982.

In this connection, it is our policy not to evaluate proposals or substitute our judgment for that of contracting officials by making independent determinations as to which offeror should receive an award or how many points each proposal should have received. We will not substitute our judgment for that of the procuring agency absent a clear

showing that it acted arbitrarily or unreasonably. ITEL Corporation, B-192139.7, October 18, 1979, 79-2 CPD 268. It is under these limitations that we reviewed NASA's technical evaluation of CompuServe's proposal. We find NASA's evaluation was unreasonable and, therefore, sustain the protest.

Initially, four of the solicitation's mandatory requirements were the subject of CompuServe's protest, but NASA has agreed with CompuServe on one of its grounds for protest. The remaining three before our Office are:

a. "FORMS (Mandatory 2 points)

"The DBMS/QUERY software shall perform all data handling required to support 'forms' data entry and display at interactive CRT terminals. This will include (1) forms generation at CRT terminals; (2) display of database information to a formatted CRT screen; and (3) receipt of block transmitted information from formatted CRT screens, [preprogrammed representations of form images which allows the operator to fill in the blanks of the forms with information.]"

b. "COMPUTED FIELDS (Mandatory 1 point)

"The DBMS shall provide the capability to create computed fields (calculated from other fields) for reporting purposes. These fields shall be subject to manipulation by the QUERY S/W as are non-computed fields (i.e., selected on, sorted on, and summarized on)."

c. "DBMS/QUERY

"CROSS TABULATION REPORTING (Mandatory 1 point)

"The query software will provide cross tabulation reports."

Regarding its Data Base Management System, System 1022, CompuServe argues that the "FORMS" requirement does not preclude the use of software which is separate, i.e., stand-alone, or independent, from the DBMS/QUERY software. In addition, CompuServe states that the software that has been proposed, "FORMUP" (Formatted Update Utility), while being an independent program, was designed to support user access and maintenance of System 1022 databases via a formatted CRT terminal. The user would not be required to write any programs to use "FORMUP."

NASA submits that the words "DBMS/QUERY software shall perform" means "that the forms must be part of the DBMS/QUERY software and not a separate program such as CompuServe's FORMUP." It is NASA's belief that the user would be required to write FORTRAN sub-routines to do special editing or validation. NASA contends that these subroutines would require skills that are beyond the capabilities of the end-user personnel.

Our review of CompuServe's proposal indicates that NASA's concern in regard to writing FORTRAN sub-routines is unfounded. CompuServe's proposal provides that the end-user operators will be able to enter data and display it at the terminals, etc., without the need for any further programming by the user.

We note that it is within normal industry practice to supply the DBMS/QUERY software and the screenhandler as separate packages and connect them at the time of installation. This gives the user the desired simultaneous operation without requiring the user to do additional programming. The output from the CRT terminal is passed to the DBMS when the user pushes the entry or carriage return key. The result is an integral network--the two programs running simultaneously, with the user unaware of the method used to connect the programs.

With respect to the "Computed Fields" requirement, CompuServe contends that System 1022 provides the capability to create computed fields for reporting purposes and does allow the user to select on, sort on, and summarize on the computed fields. A computed field contains data obtained by computation which may include one or more arithmetic or logic operations and are stored in an assigned area in a record used for a particular category of data. CompuServe explains that its system offers a wide variety of selection criteria involving relational and logical operations, standard arithmetic operations and common functions. Also, CompuServe advises that its system will sort in ascending or descending order. In regard to the summarization aspect of this requirement, CompuServe in its proposal does set forth its system's capabilities when it discusses the comprehensive report writer which facilitates the generation of reports from one or more data sets, using a few basic commands.

NASA, in response, makes the general statement that the CompuServe proposal has not demonstrated that CompuServe had the capability to meet the "Computed Field" requirement. However, NASA does concede that CompuServe has shown some capability in sorting computed fields.

Our review of CompuServe's proposal, with its accompanying and referenced technical documentation and TSP/MASC Schedule Price list, indicates that CompuServe has the capability to meet the "Computed Field" requirement. CompuServe's proposal on page 7 states the "[a]ttributes in the database may be optimized for retrieval [i.e., selection]." Also, reference is made to the availability of selection criteria with respect to relational, logical or arithmetical expressions. On page 8, there is discussion concerning CompuServe's sorting capabilities but, since this has been conceded, no further discussion is necessary. With respect to the summarization capability, the CompuServe proposal on page 9 provides:

"Combining two data bases * * * can be accomplished with the single MERGE [i.e. Summary] command. Multiple

database handling is further simplified by the cross-reference feature of the EXTRACT (or MAP) command. Finally, the MEDIAN command calculates and displays the mid-value of any attribute or expression from a record subset."

Furthermore, CompuServe's Technical Manual, UP1022 "A Generalized System 1022 Utility - version 3(3)," also adequately indicates its capability to meet the sort on, select on, and summarize on computed fields.

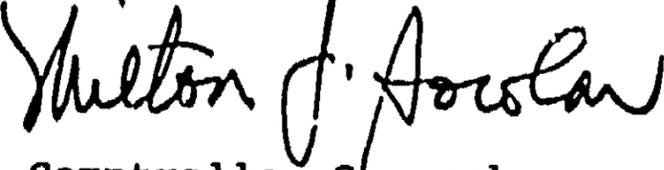
Concerning CompuServe's final contention, that CompuServe's proposal satisfies the cross tabulation reporting requirement, it is CompuServe's position that System 1022 provides cross tabulation reports. This capability is provided by CompuServe's utilization of a report generation module. The module performs when the operator employs the user report procedure which was written using the DBMS's command and report writing capabilities. CompuServe states that these procedures "are easily formulated and require no specialized ADP knowledge." CompuServe argues that the requirement does not specify the technique the awardee is to use to satisfy the requirement.

NASA is essentially saying that its technique, although it never describes it, and not CompuServe's technique, is the only acceptable method. It is NASA's desire to have the software function with "little or negligible input from the Government user."

The RFP, as noted above, only requires that cross tabulation reports be provided by the awardee's system. While NASA states that the requirement called for "the Query software to perform the cross tabulation and not for the Government user to build cross tabulation procedures," this is not indicated by the RFP. CompuServe's system included a DBMS/QUERY software package and a tabulations. These two separate packages when used together will function as a single entity. In this circumstance, CompuServe's system does meet the "Cross Tabulation" requirement.

We sustain the protest.

Since CompuServe's system met the three mandatory requirements mentioned above, CompuServe should have been included in the competitive range for negotiations. Because it was not, we recommend that the options under the contract to The Service Bureau Company not be exercised and the requirement be resolicited.

for 
Comptroller General
of the United States