



The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: International Mobile Machines Institute
File: B-232058
Date: October 28, 1988

DIGEST

Agency reasonably determined in small purchase procurement for training services that award to firm quoting the lowest price would not be in the government's best interest because that firm's instructors were not able to present students completing the course with certificates as specified in the request for quotations.

DECISION

International Mobile Machines Institute (IMMI) protests the failure of the United States Property and Fiscal Office for Connecticut to issue it a purchase order to conduct a Communications Security Custodian course for members of the Connecticut National Guard. The protester argues that it should have received the purchase order because its price, quoted in response to request for quotations (RFQ) No. DAHA06-88-Q-0018, was lower than the price quoted by the awardee, National Defense Communications Security, Inc.

We deny the protest.

In February 1988, the Fiscal Officer for Connecticut orally solicited a quotation from National for instruction of the standardized communications security custodian course for soldiers in the Connecticut Army National Guard during the 2-week period July 31-August 13, 1988. National quoted a price of \$17,680 for two instructors to teach 34 students. After he had orally solicited National, the contracting officer learned that IMMI had expressed an interest in competing for communications training contracts. Accordingly, the Fiscal Officer issued the RFQ for the course for 34 students.

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IMMI quoted a price of \$9,950 for a course taught by one instructor.^{1/}

In a letter accompanying its quotation, IMMI noted that its quote was predicated on several assumptions, one of which was that the Connecticut National Guard would requisition and supply National Security Agency (NSA) recognized certificates of training to students who successfully completed the course.^{2/} IMMI also noted in its letter that "based on discussions with Ft. Gordon personnel, it may be necessary for the Connecticut National Guard to obtain a quota for the instructor(s) to attend the Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC] approved 80 hour course at Ft. Gordon, Georgia."

The contracting officer determined that IMMI's qualification of its quotation indicated that its instructor might not fully meet the RFP requirements. In particular, agency officials were concerned that at the time it submitted its quotation, IMMI could not provide NSA recognized certificates of training and did not have instructors who were TRADOC approved. The contracting officer therefore determined that despite IMMI's lower price, award to National was in the government's best interest. On May 31, he issued a purchase order to National.

IMMI argues that it was qualified to perform the services and that since its price was lower than National's it should have received the award.

This procurement was conducted using small purchase procedures, which are designed to minimize the administrative costs of acquiring relatively inexpensive items or services. In conducting such a procurement, a contracting officer need only solicit quotations from a reasonable number of potential sources, judge the advantages and disadvantages of each quotation in relation to the prices quoted, and determine in good faith which quotation will best meet the needs of the government. Brennan Associates, Inc., B-231859, Sept. 28, 1988, 88-2 CPD _____. An award need not be made to the source quoting the lowest price so long as the contracting officer reasonably determines that

^{1/} In early July, the contracting officer requested a revised quotation for the services of two instructors. IMMI responded by increasing its price to \$14,700.

^{2/} The RFQ provided that "an NSA recognized certificate of training must be issued upon completion of the training."

award to another source is in the government's best interest and that the second source's price is reasonable. Creative Electric Inc., B-206684, July 15, 1983, 83-2 CPD ¶ 95.

Here, we think that the contracting officer could reasonably have determined, based on his concerns about IMMI's instructor's lack of certification, that award to National was in the government's best interest despite IMMI's lower price. As we understand the record, IMMI's instructor was not certified because he had not attended the TRADOC approved course and was therefore not authorized to issue NSA recognized certificates to students successfully completing the course. Although IMMI argues that its instructor would be current with the course material despite the fact that he had not attended the TRADOC course, we do not think it was unreasonable for the agency to prefer a contractor whose instructors had attended the TRADOC course and were thus able to supply the required certificates. Although IMMI argues that it could obtain certificates of training through the National Guard Professional Education Center, we do not think that it was unreasonable for the agency to determine that the awardee's instructors should be able to issue the certificates themselves. Since it is therefore our view that the agency had a reasonable basis for determining that award based on a quotation other than the low one was in its best interest, we deny the protest.^{3/}


James F. Hinchman
General Counsel

^{3/} The protester raises a number of allegations concerning the dates and content of discussions with various agency personnel both before and after the award. In view of our conclusion that the agency acted reasonably in not selecting IMMI based on the material submitted with its quote, these matters are irrelevant and will not be considered.