

Benejam



Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: East West Research, Inc.

File: B-239919

Date: August 28, 1990

Richard Snyder, for the protester.
Phillip F. Eckert, Jr., Esq., Office of the General Counsel,
Defense Logistics Agency, for the agency.
Aldo A. Benejam, Esq., and Christine S. Melody, Esq., Office
of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation
of the decision.

DIGEST

Purchase description which identifies item by National Stock Number and certain salient characteristics and includes American National Standards Institute standards is unobjectionable since it provides sufficient detail to allow offerors to compete intelligently and on an equal basis.

DECISION

East West Research, Inc. protests the terms of request for quotations (RFQ) No. DLA400-90-Q-NB74, issued by the Defense General Supply Center, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) for abrasive wheels. East West contends that the RFQ included an inadequate purchase description in violation of Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) § 10.004(b)(1).

We deny the protest.

The RFQ, issued on April 12, 1990^{1/} under small purchase procedures, requested quotations on 58,267 abrasive wheels. The item description identifies the abrasive wheels by National Stock Number (NSN) and certain salient characteristics, and includes American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards B7.1, B74.13, and B74.2, which set forth certain safety requirements, size and shape classifications, and standard markings for the wheels.

^{1/} Following changes to provide appropriate packaging requirements, the RFQ was reissued on May 17, with a closing date of June 7. East West filed this protest in our Office on June 5.

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East West alleges that FAR § 10.004(b)(1) requires the agency to use a more detailed purchase description to identify the required item. In support of its position, East West contends that the description in the RFQ lacks certain information--the abrasive wheel's principles of operation, restrictive environmental conditions, intended use, equipment with which the item is to be used--which, the protester maintains, is required to be included in the RFQ under FAR § 10.004(b)(1)(v)-(ix).

Offerors must be given sufficient detail in a solicitation to be able to compete intelligently and on an equal basis, and procuring agencies therefore must provide specifications that are free from ambiguity and accurately describe the agency's minimum needs. University Research Corp., 64 Comp. Gen. 273 (1985), 85-1 CPD ¶ 210. In this regard, FAR § 10.004, entitled "Selecting specifications or descriptions for use," provides in relevant part:

"(a)(1) . . .

- (2) Items to be acquired shall be described
 - (i) by citing the applicable specification and standards or
 - (ii) by a description containing the necessary requirements.

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(b)(1) An adequate purchase description should set forth the essential physical and functional characteristics of the materials or services required. As many of the following characteristics as are necessary to express the Government's minimum requirements should be used in preparing purchase descriptions:

- (i) Common nomenclature.
- (ii) Kind of material; i.e., type, grade, alternatives, etc.
- (iii) Electrical data, if any.
- (iv) Dimensions, size, or capacity.
- (v) Principles of operation.
- (vi) Restrictive environmental conditions.
- (vii) Intended use, including--
 - (A) Location within an assembly, and
 - (B) Essential operating condition.
- (viii) Equipment with which the item is to be used.
- (ix) Other pertinent information that further describes the item, material, or service required."

Contrary to East West's assertion, FAR § 10.004(b)(1) does not require agencies to identify required items by setting forth all of the characteristics listed in the regulation. Rather, by its terms, the provision merely requires that agencies use as many of the characteristics listed as are necessary to express the government's minimum needs. See also FAR § 10.001 ("purchase description" is a description of the essential physical characteristics and functions required to meet the government's minimum needs).

We think the RFQ's purchase description here is adequate. In addition to identifying the required abrasive wheel by its NSN, the RFQ fully described the salient characteristics of the required item including wheel diameter (3.0") and thickness (0.125"), arbor hole diameter (0.375"), abrasive type (aluminum oxide), grit size (36), hardness (R), and bond type (resinoid reinforced). Further, ANSI standard B7.1 contains detailed safety requirements pertaining to the handling, care and protection of abrasive wheels, including general machine conditions, mounting, standard wheel speeds, special wheel speeds, and general operating rules; ANSI standard B74.2 sets forth specifications for shapes and sizes of abrasive wheels; and ANSI standard B74.13 describes standard markings for identifying the wheels. The RFQ thus clearly contains sufficient detail to allow offerors to compete intelligently and on an equal basis.

In its protest, East West focuses on the inclusion of the ANSI standards in the RFQ, in essence arguing that DLA is not authorized to use the ANSI standards alone, but instead must use a more detailed purchase description. As noted above, that is precisely what DLA has done, identifying the item to be procured by NSN and salient characteristics, as well as by reference to the ANSI standards. Since the record does not show that the purchase description devised by the agency inaccurately expresses the agency's minimum needs, prevents East West or other vendors from offering items meeting the description, or is otherwise inadequate, we see no basis to object to use of the purchase description in the RFQ.

The protest is denied.



for James F. Hinchman
General Counsel