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Comptroller General
of the United States

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

Decision

Matter of: Sevatec, Inc.

File: B-405681

Date: December 9, 2011

Sonny Kakar and Angela D. Leno, Sevatec, Inc., for the protester.
Rand L. Allen, Esq., Kara M. Sacilotto, Esq., Brian G. Walsh, Esq., and
Tracye Winfrey Howard, Esq., Wiley Rein LLP, for Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc., an
intervenor.

Herman J. Narcho, Esq., Department of Labor, for the agency.
Paul N. Wengert, Esq., and Sharon L. Larkin, Esq., Office of the General Counsel,
GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

Protest that agency misevaluated protester's quotation in competition for Federal Supply Schedule blanket purchase agreement is denied where resumes in protester's quotation showed that the candidates lacked the qualifications specified in the solicitation for their respective positions, and thus the evaluation of the protester's quotation as unacceptable was reasonable, supported by the record, and consistent with the solicitation.

DECISION

Sevatec, Inc., of Falls Church, Virginia, a small business, protests the issuance of a Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) blanket purchase agreement (BPA) to Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc. (BAH), of McLean, Virginia, by the Department of Labor (DoL) under request for quotations (RFQ) No. DOL111RQ21285 for information technology support services. Sevatec argues that its quotation was misevaluated under the key personnel factor of the RFQ, and was unreasonably rejected as unacceptable.

We deny the protest.¹

¹ Sevatec was not represented by counsel who could seek access to nonpublic information under a protective order. Accordingly, our discussion is necessarily general in some respects to avoid disclosure of nonpublic proprietary information.

(continued...)

BACKGROUND

The DoL issued the RFQ on June 28, 2011, seeking quotations from firms holding FSS contracts to provide program and technical support for the GovBenefits.gov program. RFQ at 1. The RFQ anticipated the issuance of a single BPA to the successful FSS contractor, which would allow the DoL to issue time-and-materials, labor-hour, or fixed-price task orders for requirements within the scope of the BPA. Id. at 8. The duration of the BPA was to be for one year with four 1-year options. Id. at 3-5.

A statement of work (SOW) accompanied the RFQ and outlined the scope of required services under eight task groups: program, project and management; planning, tracking, and control; customer relationship management; web site and infrastructure development and operation; measurement and metrics; change management; business process reengineering; and other program support. SOW at 2. The “other program support” group consisted of administrative support for procurements (principally market research and preparation of procurement documentation), independent validation and verification (principally providing quality control and compliance for the vendor’s deliverables), information technology (IT) security assurance (principally locating certified IT security experts to perform and manage security compliance activities), and language translation services. Id. at 15.

The SOW also set forth requirements for seven key personnel to be supplied by the vendor: program manager, project manager/team lead, senior technical analyst/specialist, technical analyst/specialist, senior business analyst/specialist, business analyst/specialist, and administrative specialist. Id. at 21-25. For the program manager, for example, the SOW listed both general experience requirements and individual qualifications, which included the following:

- At least 15 years’ experience managing very complex and/or high risk programs or series of programs and providing internal/external IT support services to management and technical staff.
- At least 10 years’ experience with program management processes and tools supporting tasks under this contract.

Id. at 21.

In similar fashion, for the Project Manager/Team Lead key position, the SOW specified individual qualifications, which included the following:

(...continued)

Our decision, however, is based on our review of the entire record, including non-public information.

- Excellent strategic thinking and superior written and presentation skills and distinctive problem-solving abilities and solving skills to provide support for the centralized EA [enterprise architecture] repository² and strategic road mapping processes.
- Ability to decompose business programs into an actionable set of activities, to include business process modeling, simulation, and validating the business premise.
- Ability to model the customer's business using an excellent understanding of enterprise architectural main issues and priorities according to customer key drivers in the areas of Business, Systems and/or Infrastructural design. Ability to listen actively, critically analyze and penetrate to the real issues in all these areas.

Id. at 22.

The RFQ instructed interested vendors to arrange their quotations in four volumes: technical approach, past performance, socioeconomic status, and price. RFQ at 13-15. The technical approach volume was to be divided into four subfactors: understanding of the requirement, key personnel, corporate experience, and evaluation survey. Id. at 14. Under the key personnel subfactor, the RFQ directed vendors to show the experience and qualifications of all key personnel, include resumes for the key personnel, and provide a matrix relating the background/experience of the proposed personnel to the corresponding SOW tasking for the proposed labor category and level. Id. at 14.

The RFQ provided that the DoL would evaluate quotations on a best-value basis considering technical, past performance, socioeconomic status, and evaluated price.³ Id. at 16-17. Under the technical factor, the RFQ provided that the four subfactors (understanding of the requirement, key personnel, corporate experience, and evaluation survey) would be assigned adjectival ratings of outstanding, good, acceptable, and unacceptable. Any quotation found to have a major error, omission, or deficiency would be rated unacceptable. Id. at 18. Furthermore, any quotation that was not rated at least "acceptable" under the technical factor, and under each of its subfactors, would not be eligible for award. Id. at 15.

² In an appendix, the RFQ provided Internet links to supporting documentation, including a link to the DoL's enterprise architecture documentation. RFQ at 30.

³ In determining best value, the RFQ provided that technical, past performance, and socioeconomic status factors were of equal importance and, when combined, were significantly more important than price. RFQ at 15.

The DoL received quotations from three FSS contractors: BAH (the incumbent firm), Sevatec, and another small business.

Sevatec's quotation responded to each of the four technical subfactors, provided past performance information, identified the firm as a small business under the socioeconomic status factor, and provided labor rates for the price evaluation. In particular, under the key personnel subfactor of the technical factor, Sevatec described the qualifications of the personnel selected for its key positions, provided resumes, and asserted that each candidate met each of the applicable qualifications specified in the SOW.

The DoL evaluated Sevatec's quotation and rated it unacceptable under the technical factor. In support of this unacceptable rating, the DoL evaluators determined Sevatec's quotation to be unacceptable under the key personnel subfactor, based on five weaknesses and nine deficiencies.⁴ Most of the identified deficiencies were applicable to Sevatec's candidates for program manager, and project manager/team lead, such as the following:

- The proposed Program Manager resume does not demonstrate experience in Program Management (as distinct from Project Management).⁵
- The proposed Program Manager's Project Management experience is from 3/09 to date and does not amount to 16 years as the contractor's matrix (Pg 14) claims.

⁴ Sevatec's quotation was rated acceptable under the other three technical subfactors: understanding of the requirement, corporate experience, and evaluation survey.

⁵ In response to an inquiry from our Office requesting clarification, the parties agreed that program management and project management represent distinct (albeit related) roles. The parties agreed that a 1-page comparison of those roles presented by the Project Management Institute was an accurate depiction of the differences. That comparison provides, as an example, that a project manager manages "a project team to meet the project objectives," while a program manager manages "program staff and the project managers, providing vision and overall leadership." Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (4th ed. 2008), at 9. As another example, a project manager "monitor[s] and control[s] the work of producing the products, services, or results that the project was undertaken to produce," while a program manager "monitor[s] the progress of program components to ensure the overall goals, schedule, budget, and benefits of the program will be met." Id.

- The proposed Program Manager does not show "at least 15 years' experience managing very complex programs or series of programs" as the solicitation requires.
- The proposed Program Manager resume does not show "at least 10 years' experience with program management processes", as the solicitation requires.
- Proposed Project Manager/Team Lead: "13 years in the information technology industry, specializing in the delivery of custom and [off-the-shelf]-based software applications" is not relevant experience for the solicitation requirement: "Excellent strategic thinking and superior written and presentation skills and distinctive problem-solving abilities..."
- Proposed Project Manager/Team Lead: "used such technologies such as [a list of software], . . ." is not relevant experience for the solicitation requirement: "Ability to model the customer's business an excellent understanding of enterprise architecture[e] main issues and priorities according to customer key drivers ..."

Agency Report (AR), Tab 16, Final Evaluation Report Part II, at 24-25.

Although Sevatec's quotation was rated unacceptable under the key personnel subfactor, BAH's quotation was rated outstanding under all technical subfactors, as follows:

	Understanding of Requirement	Key Personnel	Corporate Experience	Evaluation Survey
BAH	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Sevatec	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

AR, Tab 15, Final Evaluation Report Part I, at 2.⁶

Sevatec based its pricing on the firm's general-purpose information technology (Schedule 70) FSS contract. BAH based its pricing on that firm's Schedule 70 and MOBIS (mission oriented business integrated services) FSS contracts. AR, Tab 14, Source Selection Decision, at 29-30. The overall evaluation results were as follows:

⁶ The third vendor's quotation was evaluated as unacceptable overall and was not considered for award; thus, we do not discuss this vendor's quotation or its evaluation.

	Technical	Past Performance	Evaluated Price
BAH	Outstanding	Low Risk	\$14.7 million
Sevatec	Unacceptable	Low Risk	\$10.0 million

AR, Tab 14, Source Selection Decision, at 3.

Since only BAH submitted an acceptable quotation, on August 24, 2011, the DoL issued a BPA to that firm. Id. On August 29, Sevatec received notice of the BPA's issuance and, on September 1, the DoL provided a written debriefing. Protest, attachs. 1-2, Award Notice and Debriefing. On September 6, Sevatec filed this protest.

DISCUSSION

Sevatec challenges the evaluation of its quotation under all technical subfactors, and especially key personnel. Sevatec also argues that the DoL failed to consider the socioeconomic status factor and failed to properly consider Sevatec's lower evaluated price.

In a competitive FSS procurement, it is the vendor's burden to submit a quotation that is adequately written and establishes the merits of the quotation. CMI Mgmt., Inc., B-404645, Mar. 2, 2011, 2011 CPD ¶ 66 at 5. This principle is no less important where a solicitation requires the submission of resumes that demonstrate ability or experience of key personnel. E.g., Critical Incident Solutions, LLC, B-298077, May 30, 2006, 2006 CPD ¶ 88 at 4 (protest that agency miscalculated protester's personnel resume as unacceptable is denied where evaluators reasonably found that resume did not clearly show that the protester's candidate had the skills required in the solicitation). Where a vendor challenges the agency's evaluation of the quotations, we will review the record to ensure that the agency's evaluation is reasonable and consistent with the terms of the solicitation. Neopost USA Inc., B-404195, B-404195.2, Jan. 19, 2011, 2011 CPD ¶ 35 at 4; AlliedBarton Sec. Servs. LLC, B-299978 et al., Oct. 9, 2007, 2007 CPD ¶ 186 at 6. A protester's mere disagreement with the agency's judgment does not establish that the evaluation was unreasonable. Belzon, Inc., B-404416 et al., Feb. 9, 2011, 2011 CPD ¶ 40 at 6.

As explained below, we find that the evaluation of Sevatec's quotation was reasonable in all material respects. We consider first Sevatec's challenges to the ratings under the technical factor, and in particular, the qualifications of two of the firm's candidates under the key personnel subfactor. Based on our review of the record, we agree that the evaluation of the key personnel subfactor of the technical factor was reasonable, and that the DoL properly rated Sevatec unacceptable under that subfactor. On that basis, we conclude that the DoL reasonably rated Sevatec unacceptable under the technical factor. Since Sevatec was reasonably rated

technically unacceptable, we conclude that the DoL properly found Sevatec's quotation unacceptable overall, and thus the DoL was not required to consider the quotation further.⁷ Although Sevatec raises numerous challenges to the evaluation, we discuss only several representative examples of the protested issues below.

Key Personnel Subfactor Evaluation of Sevatec Program Manager Candidate

Sevatec argues that the DoL unreasonably assigned deficiencies against its quotation under the key personnel subfactor of the technical factor based on the qualifications of its candidate for program manager. We discuss two examples (relating to four deficiencies), to illustrate how the evaluation of Sevatec's program manager candidate reasonably reflected shortcomings in the candidate's qualifications, and was consistent with the evaluation criteria stated in the RFQ.

First, as noted above, the qualifications for the program manager candidate included that the candidate have "at least 10 years' experience with program management processes and tools supporting tasks under this contract." SOW at 21. The DoL concluded that Sevatec's candidate's resume did not demonstrate "experience in program management (as distinct from project management)" and did not show "at least 10 years experience with program management processes." AR, Tab 16, Final Evaluation Report Part II, at 24. Sevatec argues that DoL's conclusions were unreasonable because the candidate's resume mentions his having responsibility for providing "program deliverables,"⁸ and states that the candidate had supported both software development lifecycle requirements, and capital planning and investment control requirements. Protest at 14. Additionally, Sevatec asserts that the candidate provided program management support at the DoL Office of Information Systems and Technology, and program level support "for several assignments during his career." Id.

Our review of the record, however, supports the reasonableness of the DoL's conclusions. Contrary to Sevatec's arguments, our review confirms that the program

⁷ Accordingly, we will not consider Sevatec's other challenges to each of the other weaknesses and deficiencies assessed to its quotation in the technical evaluation, to the DoL's failure to consider Sevatec's small business status under the socioeconomic status factor, or to the selection of BAH at a higher evaluated price than Sevatec.

⁸ Sevatec argues that the resume stated that providing program deliverables was one of the candidate's responsibilities--apparently referring to a position performed for approximately 9 months during 2009 to 2010, where the resume states that the candidate "reviewed and updated Systems Development Lifecycle (SDLC)/SLM [System Lifecycle Management] documents for program deliverables." AR, Tab 7, Sevatec Technical Quotation, at 18.

manager candidate's resume showed only experience with project management, rather than program management, and therefore failed to meet the qualifications specified in the SOW. Sevatec's quotation stated generally that the candidate's relevant experience consisted of performance as a "project manager and technical lead" for 12 years on government information technology efforts. AR, Tab 7, Sevatec Technical Quotation, at 15. The resume specifically identified the candidate's positions as "project manager" or "technical project manager," and the duties are generally described as involving the management of teams, not programs. Id. at 16-18. Even recently, the candidate's role (from mid-2010 to mid-2011) was described in the resume "[a]s the project manager for [a particular] project for two . . . mission critical programs . . . [where the candidate] is responsible all project management activities . . ." Id. at 16.

By its own terms, the resume relates the candidate's experience to project management, not program management.⁹ Thus, notwithstanding Sevatec's arguments that its candidate had a role in providing "program deliverables" and unidentified program-level support, Sevatec's quotation did not identify any experience as a program manager, or show that the candidate used program management processes or tools. Simply put, Sevatec has not shown that the resume demonstrated program management experience. As such, we agree with the agency's assessment that the quotation did not show that the program manager candidate had program management experience (as compared to project management experience), and more generally, did not show at least 10 years experience in "program management processes and tools supporting tasks under this contract." See SOW at 21.

Sevatec also challenges the assessment of two additional deficiencies because the proposed program manager lacked the claimed 16 years of project management experience, and because the resume does not establish at least 15 years of providing leadership of complex and high risk programs, and providing support to management and technical staff. See AR, Tab 16, Final Evaluation Report Part II, at 24.

⁹ Furthermore, the Project Management Institute description of program management, as quoted above, describes the role of a program manager as involving "managing program staff and project managers, providing vision and overall leadership," and "monitoring the progress of program components to ensure the overall goals, schedule, budget, and benefits of the program will be met." Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (4th ed. 2008), at 9.

As noted above, the SOW required the program manager candidate to possess at least 15 years of experience managing very complex and/or high risk programs or series of programs, and providing internal/external IT support services to management and technical staff. SOW at 21. In response, Sevatec's quotation described its candidate as "a technical project manager with more than 16 years of experience managing complex and critical IT [information technology] projects on behalf of government clients." AR, Tab 7, Sevatec Technical Quotation, at 15. Sevatec argues that its claim was validated by a statement in the candidate's resume that, in one of the candidate's three positions (listed together for the period from 1994 to 2005), the candidate held the title of "technical analyst lead" and

supervised and mentored small-to-medium size teams consisting of consultants and employees. [The candidate] managed system interfaces for the implementation of a[] . . . commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) package. He reported project status to senior management.

Id. at 19. Once again, Sevatec maintains that its protest thus fully refuted the agency's evaluation. Protest at 13-14; Protester's Comments at 2.

Based on our review of the quotations, we conclude that these deficiencies were reasonably assessed. Sevatec's nonspecific description of its program manager candidate's experience as being "more than 16 years of experience managing complex and critical IT projects on behalf of government clients" lacks support and is undermined by the accompanying resume. In particular, Sevatec's reference to the candidate supervising and mentoring teams as a "technical analyst lead" (and two other lesser positions) from 1994 to 2005 does not support the claim that the candidate held project management responsibilities during this period. Neither does the description of the candidate's role of "managing system interfaces" for the implementation of a COTS package show that the candidate's responsibilities--as recently as 2005--involved managing complex, high-risk, or critical projects.

Additionally, the candidate's more recent experience during 2008 is described as being a consultant who reported project status to senior project management. In 2009, the candidate served as a "senior IT consultant" who "consulted [at two quasi-governmental firms] in the areas of Project Management." Id. at 18. Thus, we conclude that even the candidate's more recent positions do not show the candidate having a role or responsibilities as a project manager in high-risk or complex projects. As a result, we agree with the assignment of deficiencies to the program manager candidate for lacking the 16-year project management experience claimed in the quotation, and lacking the required 15 years of leadership of complex and high risk programs, and providing support to management and technical staff.

Key Personnel Subfactor Evaluation of Sevatec Project Manager/Team Lead Candidate

Sevatec also challenges the deficiencies assigned to its candidate for the project manager/team lead position for not meeting required qualifications. Sevatec argues that its candidate's experience, as shown by the resume included in the quotation, is "highly relevant" to the requirements included in the solicitation, and that the assessed deficiencies are unsubstantiated. Protest at 15.

In this regard, among the requirements in the SOW for the project manager/team lead candidate was for the candidate to have "[e]xcellent strategic thinking and superior written and presentation skills and distinctive problem-solving abilities and solving skills to provide support for the centralized EA [enterprise architecture] repository and strategic road mapping processes," and the "[a]bility to model the customer's business using an excellent understanding of enterprise architectural main issues and priorities according to customer key drivers . . ." SOW at 22.

Our review of Sevatec's quotation confirms that the deficiencies assigned to the project manager/team lead candidate for lacking these two qualifications were reasonable. In responding to the requirement to show the candidate's strategic thinking and written and presentation skills relating to supporting the enterprise architecture, Sevatec's quotation stated simply that the candidate had "more than 13 years in the information technology industry, specializing in the delivery of . . . software applications that meet the strategic objectives of clients." AR, Tab 7, Sevatec Technical Quotation, at 21. In response to the requirement for the ability to model a business using an excellent understanding of enterprise architecture, the quotation merely stated that the candidate utilized a list of software tools. Id. As the agency reasonably concluded, neither of these responses adequately addressed the corresponding requirement.

Sevatec argues that relevant experience with the enterprise architecture requirements was demonstrated in the candidate's resume. We disagree. Although the resume mentions enterprise architecture generally, the narrative describing the candidate's various positions makes only brief, non-descriptive mentions of the subject. For example, the candidate's current position as director of information technology is described as having responsibility for multiple functions, among which was "enterprise architecture support" and "creat[ing] designs and architectures" to meet requirements and expectations. Id. at 22. These brief references do not demonstrate the required understanding of enterprise architectural issues and priorities that the SOW required in the qualifications for the project manager/team leader key personnel position. Accordingly, we find that the project manager/team leader candidate's resume was properly assessed as deficient.

In conclusion, our review of the record leads us to conclude that the DoL performed a reasonable evaluation of Sevatec's key personnel, properly determined that the

candidates did not meet the qualifications set forth in the RFQ, and appropriately assessed multiple deficiencies to the quotation. As noted above, the RFQ provided that a quotation found to have any deficiency was unacceptable, and thus would not be considered for award. RFQ at 15, 18. Since Sevatec's quotation was reasonably rated unacceptable, the quotation was properly rejected.

The protest is denied.

Lynn H. Gibson
General Counsel