

**United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548**

# Decision

**Matter of:** SSI Technology, Inc.

**File:** B-411585

**Date:** August 26, 2015

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Daniel Strouse, Esq., Cohen Mohr LLP, for the protester.

Wade L. Brown, Esq., Department of the Army, for the agency.

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## **DIGEST**

Protest challenging agency's technical evaluation is denied where record shows that the evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the stated evaluation criteria.

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## **DECISION**

SSI Technology, Inc., (SSI), a veteran-owned small business (VOSB), of Madison Heights, Michigan, protests the Department of the Army's issuance of a task order to Ace Electronics, Inc. (Ace), of Metuchen, New Jersey, under request for quotations (RFQ) No. W15QKN-15-R-0089, for W10 cables for the family of medium tactical vehicles (FMTV). SSI challenges the agency's evaluation of its quotation as technically unacceptable.

We deny the protest.

## **BACKGROUND**

The RFQ was issued on April 20, 2015, to holders of a previously established blanket purchase agreement (BPA), including SSI and Ace. The solicitation contemplated the issuance of a fixed-price task order for the fabrication, packaging, and shipping of FMTV W10 cables to be used in the common remotely-operated weapon station (CROWS).<sup>1</sup> Agency Report (AR), Tab C-1, Evaluation Plan, at 1;

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<sup>1</sup> The CROWS system is a remote weapon station capable of individually mounting and firing a suite of crew-served weapons. Agency Report (AR), Tab C-3,

(continued...)

Tab C-3, Statement of Work (SOW), at 1. The SOW indicated that, upon successful completion of first article testing and government approval, the contractor would be required to produce 100 cables per month until the final production quantity was met. AR, Tab C-3, SOW, at 2.

The RFQ provided that the agency would make an award on a lowest-priced, technically acceptable basis. AR, Tab C-1, Evaluation Plan, at 1. The RFQ indicated that technical quotations would be evaluated as acceptable or unacceptable based on whether the quotation met the minimum solicitation requirements. Id. The solicitation listed the minimum technical requirements as follows: (1) provide an explanation of the steps necessary to manufacture FMTV W10 cables and (2) provide a detailed explanation of the steps required to test FMTV W10 cables. Id. at 2. A quotation that failed to meet the minimum requirements would be rated unacceptable overall and would not be considered further. Id. The RFQ also noted that price would be evaluated for fairness and reasonableness. Id. at 2. Additionally, the solicitation stated that the agency intended to evaluate quotations and make an award without discussion. Id. at 1.

The Army received three quotations, including SSI's and Ace's. Contracting Officer (CO) Statement at 2. SSI's quotation provided a description of the steps it planned to take to manufacture the FMTV W10 cables. Protest, Attach. A, SSI Quotation, at 3-5. SSI's quotation also provided the following information regarding its plan to test the cable: "SSI will design and build a 'W10 Cable Electrical Test Fixture' using a Cirrus automated cable/harness tester to perform the electrical test . . . [t]he Cirrus automated tester is capable of performing all the tests . . ." Id. at 6.

The technical team evaluated SSI's quotation and found that while the quotation demonstrated that the vendor had a firm understanding of the steps necessary to manufacture the FMTV W10 cable, the quotation did not contain sufficient detail to demonstrate how SSI would meet the requirement to test the cables. AR, Tab D, Technical Evaluation, at 1. Specifically, the evaluators concluded that SSI "ha[d] not provided a detailed explanation of the steps required to test this FMTV W10 Cable . . . [SSI] merely regurgitates in the [quotation] to 'test cables to DWG 13047953 note 7,' but does not fully explain how [it] will accomplish the objective of physically testing the cables." Id. As a result, the technical team concluded that SSI's quotation was technically unacceptable. Id. at 1.

With regard to Ace's quotation, the technical team determined that Ace provided an acceptable technical approach for manufacturing and testing the cable. Id.; AR at 5.

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Statement of Work, at 1. The CROWS system utilizes multiple cables to connect components within the system. Id.

Ace received the award as the lowest-priced, technically acceptable quotation. After receiving a debriefing, SSI filed its protest with our Office on May 28.

## DISCUSSION

SSI challenges the agency's evaluation of its quotation as technically unacceptable. The protester argues that the agency unreasonably determined that SSI's quotation lacked sufficient detail as to how it would test the FMTV W10 cables.

In reviewing a protest against an agency's evaluation, we will not reevaluate quotations but we will examine the record to ensure that an agency's evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the evaluation criteria in the solicitation, as well as procurement statutes and regulations. See RightStar Sys., B-407597, Jan. 16, 2013, 2013 CPD ¶ 35 at 5. An agency's evaluation of technical quotations is primarily the responsibility of the contracting agency, since the agency is responsible for defining its needs and identifying the best method of accommodating them. See Affolter Contracting Co., Inc., B-410878, B-410878.2, Mar. 4, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 101 at 4. Based on our review of the record, we conclude that the agency reasonably determined that SSI's technical quotation was unacceptable.

The solicitation required vendors to provide a "detailed explanation of the steps required to test the FMTV W10 Cable." AR, Tab C-1, Evaluation Plan, at 2. SSI's quotation simply stated that it would test the cables using a Cirrus automated tester. The quotation did not provide any further detail regarding its use of the Cirrus tester.

SSI argues that a reasonable evaluation of its quotation would have understood that its proposed testing protocol would constitute sufficient testing for the FMTV W10 cables. Protester's Comments on Agency Report, at 3. To support this assertion, SSI states that "Cirrus testers are commonly used across the industry to diagnose errors in cables . . ." and that "[b]y noting that SSI intended to use the Cirrus automated tester, and explaining to the agency in its proposal that the tester would perform all of the tests required, SSI provided a sufficient amount of detail to the evaluators to advise them how SSI intended to test the cables." Id. We do not find this argument persuasive.

A vendor has the burden to submit a quotation that adequately addresses the requirements of the solicitation, or it runs the risk of the agency rejecting its quotation as technically unacceptable. See Verizon Fed., Inc., B-293527, March 26, 2004, 2004 CPD ¶ 186 at 3. Ultimately, as noted above, SSI had the responsibility to provide, within the four corners of its quotation, the information the agency needed to properly evaluate its proposed approach. See Watts-Obayashi, Joint Venture; Black Constr. Corp., B-409391, et al., April 4, 2014, 2014 CPD ¶ 122 at 7. Since the record demonstrates that SSI's quotation failed to provide a detailed explanation of steps required to test the cables, we have no basis to question the

reasonableness of the agency's determination that SSI's quotation was technical unacceptable. See G&M Indus., B-290354, July 17, 2002, 2002 CPD ¶ 125 at 3.

The protest is denied.

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General Counsel