



United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Decision

Matter of: American Artisan Productions, Inc.

File: B-286239

Date: November 29, 2000

Arthur L. Friedman for the protester.
Miriam R. Chapman, Esq., Department of the Interior, for the agency.
Jennifer D. Westfall-McGrail, Esq., and Christine S. Melody, Esq., Office of the
General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

Agency reasonably rejected protester's quotation for fabrication of interpretive exhibits as technically unacceptable where protester failed to demonstrate experience with the fabrication of one of the key types of exhibits.

DECISION

American Artisan Productions, Inc. protests the rejection of its quotation as technically unacceptable under request for quotations (RFQ) No. 401810Q155, issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior for interpretive support services for its southeast region field stations.

We deny the protest.

The RFQ, which was issued under the procedures of Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 12 for the acquisition of commercial items, sought a vendor to design, fabricate, and install exhibits such as dioramas, interpretive panels, audio/visual programs, photomurals, and signs at Fish and Wildlife Service facilities across the southeast. The solicitation contemplated the award of an indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract to the vendor whose quotation was determined most advantageous to the government, price and other factors considered. Non-price factors, listed in

descending order of importance, consisted of experience, technical requirements,¹ and past performance; these factors, when combined, were more important than price. Vendors were instructed to submit with their quotations materials such as photographs depicting previously completed exhibits. To permit evaluation of the reasonableness of their prices, vendors were asked to furnish prices for three sample exhibits: a natural history diorama replicating a wetlands habitat found in the Okefenokee Swamp; an exhibit panel containing original illustrations of an eagle flying, an osprey catching a fish, and an alligator sunning itself, along with 200 words of text; and a sign, with wording, depicting a swimming manatee and calf.

Three vendors submitted quotations by the July 6, 2000 closing date. American Artisan's overall price for the three sample items was lowest. After review, the evaluators determined the protester's quotation technically unacceptable, finding that American Artisan was lacking in a demonstrated ability to construct natural history dioramas and aquariums. On September 5, the contracting officer awarded a contract to Southern Custom Exhibits.

The protester challenges the agency determination of technical unacceptability, arguing that it submitted with its quotation exhibits demonstrating its experience with natural history dioramas and the various components thereof, such as specimen mounting, plant preservation and molding, and ground work sculpting. American Artisan further argues that the RFQ did not adequately apprise vendors of the significance that would be placed on experience with natural history dioramas in the evaluation.

In reviewing a protest against an agency's evaluation of quotations, we examine the record to determine whether the agency's judgment was reasonable and consistent with the stated evaluation criteria and applicable statutes and regulations. Support Servs., Inc., B-282407, B-282407.2, July 8, 1999, 99-2 CPD ¶ 30 at 3. As explained below, we find that the agency's evaluation here was reasonable.

As noted above, the agency concluded that the protester's quotation was unacceptable because it did not demonstrate experience with natural history dioramas or aquariums. As a preliminary matter, the protester does not contend, and we see no evidence in its quotation, that it submitted evidence of experience with constructing aquariums. With respect to natural history dioramas, while the protester contends that it did demonstrate such experience, it does not point to any specific examples in its quotation. Instead, in its comments on the agency report, the protester lists various projects it has performed which, it asserts, involved individual elements of diorama construction. We think that it was reasonable for the

¹ The RFQ provided for consideration of the following equally-weighted subfactors under the technical requirements factor: quality of deliverables, innovative approaches, multiplicity of tasks, and qualification of personnel.

evaluators to distinguish between experience with the fabrication of elements of a diorama, such as specimen mounting, and experience with the fabrication of a diorama itself, which involves the incorporation of many distinct elements into a cohesive whole. In sum, we see no reason to question the agency's conclusion that the protester failed to show experience with natural history dioramas or aquariums.

Regarding the protester's argument that the RFQ did not adequately apprise vendors of the weight that would be given to experience in the construction of natural history dioramas, the RFQ specifically instructed that:

In order to evaluate offeror's experience on similar projects, offeror shall provide a list of at least five (5) projects during the past three years, which best demonstrate the offeror's ability to provide exhibits as required by Fish and Wildlife Service. . . . Information on experience shall demonstrate natural history diorama[s] and aquarium[s].

RFQ at 21 (emphasis added). Moreover, we think that the fact that the first sample task called for the fabrication of a natural history diorama placed vendors on notice that this was an important category of work to be performed and that experience with it would therefore be significant in the evaluation process.

The protest is denied.

Anthony H. Gamboa
Acting General Counsel