The Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Oshkosh Truck Corporation

File: B-230977

Date: August 12, 1988

DIGEST

Contention that evaluation, under which award selection was based on composite point scores for technical and price factors, led to an irrational award is denied where point scores obtained by offerors appear reasonable, reflective of the technical and price differences of the offerors' respective proposals, and consistent with the solicitation's evaluation scheme.

DECISION

Oshkosh Truck Corporation protests the award of a contract to Teledyne Continental Motors Corporation, for 288 (including option quantities) 3000-gallon crash fire rescue vehicles, under Department of the Air Force request for proposals (RFP) No. F09603-86-R-1264. Oshkosh alleges that the Air Force improperly applied the evaluation criteria stated in the RFP, that the scoring method employed by the Air Force distorted the stated price/technical tradeoff, and that the award selection was based on evaluation factors other than those listed in the solicitation. We deny the protest.

Under the evaluation scheme in the RFP, an offeror receiving the highest scores for both price and technical factors would be in line for award, unless the source-selection official determined that the differences among technical scores did not represent a significant difference in technical merit, in which case, award would be based on lowest price. The specific evaluation factors utilized for this procurement were listed in descending order of importance as follows:

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A. Technical Proposal

1. Agent System
   Design, Construction, Performance
   Water Tank Capacity
   Foam Concentrate Tank Capacity

2. Mobility
   Acceleration
   Vehicle Cone Index
   Maximum Speed

3. Chassis

4. Cab

5. Body

6. Halon 1211 System

7. Electrical System

8. Winterization System

9. Maintainability

10. Other

B. Price

C. Facilities/Management/Quality/Safety

D. Logistics

Although not disclosed in the solicitation, the weights assigned to these four factors were: technical, 40 points; price, 30; facilities/management/quality/safety, 20; and logistics, 10. Further, with respect to the first factor, technical merit, offerors were advised that proposals fully compliant with the solicitation's stated requirements would not automatically receive the maximum points available for each subfactor, but that additional points were to be awarded for exceeding the stated requirements or for proposing a superior design.

Only Teledyne and Oshkosh responded to the RFP. An evaluation panel found both firms' initial proposals technically acceptable, although it considered Teledyne's proposed vehicle to be of superior design. Discussions were held and both firms eventually were requested to submit best and final offers (BAFOs). The final total weighted scores for

Teledyne and Oshkosh, respectively, were 88.54 (40 technical; 22.59 price, reflecting an evaluated price of $138,981,860; 16.24 facilities/management/quality/safety; and 9.71 logistics), and 82.64 (22.64 technical; 30 price, reflecting the low evaluated price of $104,645,436; 20 facilities/management/quality/safety; and 10 logistics). The source-selection official found that the disparity in technical scores reflected actual significant differences in design approach, and thus selected Teledyne, the overall highest-rated offeror, for award in accordance with the terms of the solicitation.

The Air Force's detailed scoring method was designed to ensure a uniform evaluation and, more importantly, to recognize and quantify what were considered to be significant differences in technical design. For all but five technical subfactors cited by Oshkosh, ranges of scores were established to reflect various levels of compliance with the solicitation's stated minimum requirements. Proposals found to be in general compliance with the minimum requirements were to receive approximately 50 percent of the maximum points available for the corresponding technical subfactor, while those proposals offering superior design were eligible for the remaining available points. For the other five technical subfactors (water tank capacity, foam tank capacity, acceleration, vehicle cone index, and maximum speed), offerors would only receive points for exceeding the stated minimum requirements.

The record indicates that Teledyne's considerable technical advantage (40 points as compared to the 22.64 points awarded Oshkosh) was attributable to many factors encompassing all aspects of vehicle design. Specifically, Teledyne's proposed vehicle was found to offer significantly greater firefighting capabilities than the Oshkosh truck, due to greater water and foam capacity, an independent suspension, and disc brakes on all wheels (as compared to the drum brakes utilized by Oshkosh, which, Air Force experience showed, are subject to potentially hazardous brake fade). Additionally, the frame of the Teledyne vehicle (constructed of rectangular tubing) was considered stronger and more reliable than the traditional channel tubing utilized by Oshkosh, and the Teledyne cab (which features easy access, a wrap-around windshield, a well-layed-out instrument panel, and a tilt steering column) was found better suited for the convenience and effectiveness of the crew.

While stressing that its proposal either met or exceeded each of the stated minimum requirements, Oshkosh does not take issue with the Air Force's findings that Teledyne's proposal also exceeded these requirements and, in fact, to a greater extent than its own. Rather, Oshkosh maintains that

the differences in design approach were of marginal significance and did not warrant such a great disparity in technical scoring. Oshkosh thus argues that the Air Force's evaluation was flawed in allowing these technical differences to warrant large point differentials, thereby distorting the stated relationship among the four evaluation factors. Oshkosh takes particular exception to the evaluation scheme utilized for the five subfactors under which bonus points were to be awarded for exceeding the stated minimum requirements. This method of scoring, Oshkosh maintains, exaggerated the relatively minor differences in technical approach.

We are not persuaded that the Air Force's evaluation led to improper scoring or an unreasonable selection decision. As indicated above, the performance levels and design characteristics of the two proposed vehicles were found to differ significantly; the evaluators determined that Oshkosh offered a technically acceptable vehicle fully compliant with each of the solicitation's stated minimum requirements, but that Teledyne's proposed vehicle exceeded these requirements in many respects. These perceived differences in technical merit seem to be fairly reflected in the point scores awarded the two offerors.

For example, Oshkosh received 4 out of a possible 10 points for its proposed agent (fluid discharge) system. The evaluators recognized that the Oshkosh vehicle exceeded the purchase description requirement for discharge of water and foam on hills and side slopes by 6.7 percent, but also noted that certain design features, particularly those affecting the water tank fill time and the number of mechanical changes required to allow for a conversion in the type of foam carried by the vehicle, could have been significantly improved. On the other hand, Teledyne received 8 points for this subfactor as the evaluators found that the Teledyne vehicle exceeded the same discharge requirement by 23.6 percent, and also incorporated many simplifying design features that would reduce the time required to perform many routine operations, such as the filling of the water tank, the rewinding of hoses, and the conversion from one type of foam concentrate to another. Oshkosh has not shown, and we find no basis for concluding, that this point differential was unwarranted.

Similarly, Oshkosh's 4 points for chassis, 5 for cab design and 4 for body design (out of a possible 10 points each) reflected the evaluators' determinations that Oshkosh utilized traditional, acceptable design approaches for its vehicle. At the same time, Teledyne received 10, 8 and 6 points, respectively, for these subfactors, as its vehicle was found to incorporate many advanced design techniques

such as an independent suspension, rectangular tubing for frame rails, disc brakes, large doors for easy access, an ergonomically designed instrument panel, and a wraparound windshield. Additionally, Teledyne exceeded the minimum requirements in 4 of the 5 areas for which bonus points were available (2.4 bonus points for water tank capacity, .5 bonus points for foam tank capacity, 5 bonus points for acceleration, and 2.4 bonus points for vehicle cone index), while Oshkosh only exceeded the requirements in 3 such areas (3.2 points for acceleration, 2 points for vehicle cone index, and .1 point for maximum speed). Again, we find nothing inherently unreasonable in the scores received by Teledyne and Oshkosh; the scoring seemingly reflects legitimate differences in the vehicles' comparative fire fighting capabilities.

We also find nothing generally objectionable in the scoring methods employed by the Air Force--i.e., the establishment of a range of points denoting poor, acceptable and superior performance levels with respect to most evaluation subfactors, and the assignment of bonus points for the other five. These scoring methods allowed for consideration of the differences in the vehicles' capabilities based on the factors the Air Force considered most significant, and we have found that the evaluation reasonably rated the proposals based on those differences. We do not agree that the bonus point system used for the five subfactors resulted in distorted scoring; in the final analysis, all offerors were on notice that extra points would be awarded for exceeding requirements, and Teledyne was rated higher than Oshkosh under these bonus subfactors based on exceeding requirements.

Oshkosh also speculates that the award decision was improperly supported by factors other than those specified in the solicitation. In this regard, Oshkosh refers to an alleged addendum to the source selection official's decision document which purportedly includes an analysis of the economic benefits of Teledyne's proposal. While such a document was in fact prepared, the record reveals that it had no bearing on the award selection. Teledyne, in accordance with the terms of the solicitation, was selected for award solely on the basis of its obtaining the highest composite point score for the four evaluation factors.

The protest is denied.

James F. Hinchman
General Counsel