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# Decision

**Matter of:** CACI, Inc.-Federal

**File:** B-420441.3

**Date:** November 5, 2022

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Michael P. Grogan, Esq., and Evan D. Wesser, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

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## DIGEST

1. Protest challenging evaluation of corporate experience is denied where the agency's evaluation was generally reasonable and consistent with the terms of the solicitation, and any evaluation errors were not prejudicial.
  2. Protest challenging the agency's best-value tradeoff is denied where the agency's decision was reasonable.
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## DECISION

CACI, Inc.-Federal, of Chantilly, Virginia, protests the issuance of a task order to Perspecta Enterprise Solutions LLC, of Herndon, Virginia, pursuant to request for proposals (RFP) No. 70T03020R3BCIO309, issued by the Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), for information technology management and support services. The protester contends the agency's evaluation of corporate experience and best-value tradeoff determination were unreasonable and inconsistent with the terms of the solicitation.

We deny the protest.

## BACKGROUND

The agency issued the solicitation on October 16, 2020, pursuant to the procedures in Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 16.5, to firms holding contracts under the General Services Administration's (GSA) Alliant 2 multiple-award indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract. Agency Report (AR), Tab 12, RFP amend. 11 at 07442, 07598.<sup>1</sup> The solicitation contemplated the issuance of a single task order, with fixed-price and time-and-materials contract line items, with a 1-year base period of performance and four 1-year option periods. *Id.* at 07453. The solicitation sought contractor support for TSA's information technology (IT) management, performance analysis, and collaborative technologies II (IMPACT II) requirement. Specifically, the contractor will, among other tasks, operate and maintain TSA's IT capabilities, design and implement TSA-directed system and infrastructure changes, and provide programmatic management. AR, Tab 12a, Statement of Objectives (SOO), amend. 11 at 07775.

The solicitation provided for award on a best-value tradeoff basis, considering four evaluation factors: (1) corporate experience; (2) technical; (3) price; and (4) approach. RFP at 07602. TSA utilized a two-phase evaluation process. *Id.* at 07602. In the first phase, TSA would consider proposals under the corporate experience and technical factors. The solicitation advised that for corporate experience, the agency would compare an offeror's experience to criteria identified in the RFP, and that an offeror "must show in its submitted references that it has performed on contracts that meet all of the criteria[.]" *Id.* at 07599. Under the technical factor, TSA would "determine the feasibility and congruity" of the proposal "to meet or exceed the objectives and requirements of the Solicitation." *Id.* Those offerors whose proposals were rated as acceptable or higher under these two factors would proceed to the next phase of the evaluation. *Id.* at 07602.

In phase two, the remaining offerors would be invited to submit the balance of their proposals--that is, their price, approach, and edited technical volumes<sup>2</sup>--for consideration. *Id.* An offeror's approach would be evaluated "to determine the feasibility and congruity of [approach] components to meet or exceed the Objectives of the Solicitation, including any risk mitigation efforts." *Id.* at 07600. Price would be evaluated for fairness and reasonableness. *Id.* at 07599.

The solicitation advised that "[a]ll evaluation factors will be considered in the Trade-Off process." *Id.* at 07602. The RFP further provided that corporate experience "is the

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<sup>1</sup> Our citations to the record correspond with the Bates numbers appearing on the agency report documents. Our references to the RFP are to amendment 11 to the solicitation, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> The solicitation allowed offerors to submit an edited technical proposal following the phase one evaluation. RFP at 07602.

most important factor[,]” followed by technical, approach, and price in descending order of importance. *Id.* The non-price factors, when combined, were more important than price. *Id.*

The agency’s evaluation plan established an adjectival rating scheme for the non-price factors.<sup>3</sup> See AR, Tab 13, Evaluation Plan at 11204-11205. Under the plan, corporate experience would be rated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory; a satisfactory rating would be assigned where “the Government determines that this Offeror presents a low risk of unsuccessful performance[]” and the offered experience meets all three of the solicitation’s criteria. *Id.* at 11204. TSA would utilize an adjectival rating scheme under the technical and approach factors, with four possible ratings: outstanding; good; satisfactory; or unsatisfactory. *Id.* at 11205.

The agency received multiple proposals by the phase one submission deadline, including from CACI and Perspecta. Contracting Officer’s Statement (COS) at 10. The agency evaluated the phase one proposals of CACI and Perspecta as satisfactory, and, therefore, both offerors advanced to phase two of the competition. CACI submitted its phase two proposal materials (to include a revised technical proposal following feedback provided by TSA after the phase one evaluation) on July 11. The agency evaluated the phase two proposals of CACI and Perspecta as follows:

	<b>CACI</b>	<b>Perspecta</b>
<b>Corporate Experience</b>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Technical</b>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Approach</b>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Price</b>	\$349,903,082	\$342,761,646

See *CACI, Inc.-Federal*, B-420441.1, *et al.*, Apr. 7, 2022, 2022 CPD ¶ 177 at 3 (citing that protest’s AR, Tab 21, Tradeoff Report at 11336).

Following its evaluation, TSA selected Perspecta as representing the best value to the agency and issued the firm a task order on December 13. COS at 10. In so finding, the source selection authority (SSA), who completed an independent assessment following an evaluation of proposals and a tradeoff analysis conducted by TSA’s technical evaluation team, found that Perspecta offered a superior proposal. The SSA’s rationale pointed to the assessed benefits of Perspecta’s proposal under the technical and approach factors, while noting that CACI proposed a higher price than Perspecta. Under corporate experience, the most important factor, the SSA noted the number of references each offeror submitted that met the RFP’s criteria, and noted that all of the offerors met the requirements outlined in the RFP and earned a rating of satisfactory. See *CACI, Inc.-Federal*, *supra* at 4.

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<sup>3</sup> The plan’s adjectival rating scheme was not included in the solicitation.

Following a debriefing, CACI filed a protest with our Office on January 3, 2022. CACI argued TSA improperly evaluated proposals under the RFP's corporate experience, technical, and approach factors, and conducted a flawed best-value tradeoff. Following the production of the agency report, and after several additional rounds of briefing, our Office, on March 22, held an outcome prediction alternative dispute resolution (ADR) teleconference call with the parties. See 4 C.F.R. § 21.10(e). During this call, the GAO attorney assigned to the protest advised that the protest would likely be sustained, in part, with respect to CACI's challenge to TSA's evaluation of corporate experience and the agency's treatment of that factor in the best-value tradeoff decision. Specifically, the GAO attorney explained that while the RFP established corporate experience as the most important factor for the purpose of the best-value tradeoff process, the agency impermissibly evaluated corporate experience solely on a pass/fail basis and did not afford the factor with the requisite qualitative consideration in the tradeoff decision. The GAO attorney further explained that GAO would likely deny the remainder of CACI's protest challenges to the agency's evaluation under the technical and approach factors.

Notwithstanding the predicted outcome explained by the GAO attorney during the ADR teleconference call, however, TSA requested that our Office issue a written decision resolving the protest. Accordingly, our Office issued a decision resolving CACI's protest on April 7. See *CACI, Inc.-Federal, supra*. Consistent with what the GAO attorney explained during the ADR teleconference call, our Office sustained CACI's protest with respect to the agency's evaluation and consideration in the award decision of the offerors' corporate experience, and otherwise denied the balance of the protest. *Id.* Our decision recommended that "the agency evaluate proposals in a manner consistent with the terms of the solicitation, adequately document its rationale for its ratings and tradeoff determinations, and make a new source selection decision." *Id.* at 12.

Following the issuance of our Office's decision, TSA formed a new corporate evaluation team (CET) and evaluated offerors' experience references.<sup>4</sup> COS at 11. The CET explained that it analyzed each reference against each criterion outlined in the RFP in order to identify the qualities of an offeror's experience. AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15031. The CET assigned 16 strengths and 31 weaknesses to CACI's corporate experience references. *Id.* at 15030-15056. The CET concluded that CACI "did not meet all criteria and sub-criterion across the references[.]" *Id.* at 15057.

After the CET's evaluation, the source selection evaluation board (SSEB) conducted a trade-off analysis using the CET findings and conclusions. See AR, Tab 41, Revised SSEB Tradeoff Analysis. The SSEB again found that Perspecta represented the best value to TSA. *Id.* at 15146. In so concluding, the SSEB assessed that Perspecta's references carried "less risk than CACI's" because the protester "did not substantiate all [of the corporate experience factor] sub-criterion requirements." *Id.* at 15125. Specifically, Perspecta demonstrated relevant experience performing all of the 18 sub-criteria areas, while CACI's proposal only demonstrated relevant experience

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<sup>4</sup> The agency explains that a new CET was required because two members of the 2021 evaluation team were no longer employed by TSA. MOL at 9-10.

performing 15 of the sub-criteria areas. Additionally, the SSEB further found that the strengths assigned to CACI's experience references "do not outweigh the risk created by [CACI] not [demonstrating] experience [in] all of the sub-criteria areas." *Id.* In this regard, the SSEB found that even where CACI's proposal demonstrated some experience performing certain sub-criteria areas, the proposal failed to provide adequate detail substantiating CACI's specific experience. *Id.* The SSA, undertaking an independent analysis, agreed with the SSEB's findings and concluded that Perspecta's proposal--deemed superior to CACI's across all non-price evaluation factors, and approximately 2 percent lower in price--represented the best value to the agency. AR, Tab 38, Revised Source Selection Decision Document (Revised SSDD) at 15084-15085. TSA issued a notification to Perspecta to resume work on the task order on August 1. COS at 11. Following a debriefing, CACI filed the instant protest with our Office on August 8.<sup>5</sup>

## DISCUSSION

CACI raises two principal challenges to the agency's conduct of the procurement. First, the protester contends the agency's evaluation of CACI's corporate experience was flawed. In this regard, CACI argues TSA's assignment of various weaknesses were either unreasonable or inconsistent with the terms of solicitation. Protest at 15-22, 25-33; Comments at 10-23, 25-28; Supp. Comments at 6-11, 16-18. Second, the protester argues that the agency's best-value tradeoff and source selection decision were defective. Protest at 12-14; Comments at 3-9; Supp. Comments at 3-6. For the reasons that follow, we find no basis to sustain the protest.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Based on the approximately \$342 million value of the task order, the protest falls within our statutory grant of jurisdiction to hear protests in connection with task and delivery orders valued in excess of \$10 million issued under civilian agency multiple-award IDIQ contracts. 41 U.S.C. § 4106(f).

<sup>6</sup> CACI raises other collateral allegations. Although our decision does not specifically address all of the protester's arguments, we have considered each argument and find that none provides a basis on which to sustain the protest. For example, the protester alleges TSA unreasonably failed to assign its proposal multiple strengths, where the firm's experience references exceeded various sub-criteria. Protest at 25-28; Comments at 26-27; Supp. Comments at 16-18.

We have explained that an agency's judgment that features identified in a proposal do not significantly exceed the requirements of the RFP, or provide advantages to the government--and thus do not warrant the assessment of unique strengths--is a matter within the agency's discretion and one that we will not disturb where the protester has failed to demonstrate that the evaluation was unreasonable. *Protection Strategies, Inc.*, B-416635, Nov. 1, 2018, 2019 CPD ¶ 33 at 8 n.4. Here, as explained in the declaration by one of the two CET members, CACI's proposal did not warrant additional strengths for experience that exceeded the minimum sub-criteria because "[t]here is no technical reason that having experience with quantities exceeding the minimums established in

## Evaluation of Corporate Experience

As noted above, the task order competition here was conducted pursuant to FAR subpart 16.5. The evaluation of proposals in a task order competition is primarily a matter within the contracting agency's discretion because the agency is responsible for defining its needs and the best method of accommodating them. *Engility Corp.*, B-413120.3 *et al.*, Feb. 14, 2017, 2017 CPD ¶ 70 at 15. When reviewing protests of an award in a task order competition, we do not reevaluate proposals, but examine the record to determine whether the evaluation and source selection decision are reasonable and consistent with the solicitation's evaluation criteria and applicable procurement laws and regulations. *DynCorp Int'l LLC*, B-411465, B-411465.2, Aug. 4, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 228 at 7. A protestor's disagreement with the agency's judgment, by itself, is not sufficient to establish that an agency acted unreasonably. *Engility Corp.*, *supra* at 16.

CACI presents several arguments challenging TSA's evaluation of its submitted corporate experience, contending the assignment of numerous weaknesses were unreasonable or inconsistent with the terms of the solicitation. In this regard, CACI argues TSA acted unreasonably where it downgraded the firm's proposal for failing to include sufficient detail explaining its experience, required information a reasonable offeror would not have anticipated needed to be included in its narrative explanation, or overlooked relevant proposal information. Protest at 15-33; Comments at 10-28; Supp. Comments at 6-18. The protester also argues the RFP did not permit TSA to assign weaknesses where a single reference did not meet each of the eighteen evaluation sub-criterion because the RFP contemplated a cumulative evaluation of experience references. Comments at 11-13; Supp. Comments at 6-7. The agency contends its evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the terms of the RFP. MOL at 2-11; Supp. MOL at 1-13.

As relevant to this protest, the solicitation identified three corporate experience criteria relating to minimum size, scope, and complexity requirements. RFP at 07582. Offerors were to provide no more than six references that "collectively, meet all of the three (3) Criteria[.]" *Id.* The RFP included a table identifying these three criteria--end-user support, infrastructure, and government experience--and identified 18 sub-criteria:

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the RFP would increase the likelihood of successful contract execution[.]" CET Member Declaration at 8. We view this conclusion as reasonable. The RFP explained that a favorable evaluation under this factor required not merely exceeding minimum size requirements, but instead, a detailed explanation of the relevance of previous work to the instant requirement, as well as a description of how those methods would be applied. RFP at 07579. While the protester may disagree with the agency's evaluation conclusions, in this regard, such disagreement, without more, does not render the evaluation unreasonable. *The Ginn Grp., Inc.*, B-420165, B-420165.2, Dec. 22, 2021, 2022 CPD ¶ 17 at 9.

<b>CORPORATE EXPERIENCE</b>		
<b>Criterion 1: End User Support</b>	<b>Criterion 2: Infrastructure</b>	<b>Criterion 3: Government Experience</b>
SubCriterion 1a. US Government or Industry Experience	SubCriterion 2a. US Government or Industry Experience	SubCriterion 3a. US Government Experience
SubCriterion 1b. 15,000 seats/end users, including 3,000 mobile phones/iPads	SubCriterion 2b. 1,000 Network Nodes (switches/routers/firewalls/WAPs)	SubCriterion 3b. 5,000 users
SubCriterion 1c. 10,000 (phone calls/emails) managed monthly	SubCriterion 2c. 1,000 servers (physical and virtual) in a hybrid environment	SubCriterion 3c. Providing both infrastructure and end user support services
SubCriterion 1d. 200 locations	SubCriterion 2d. 200 locations	SubCriterion 3d. 25 locations
SubCriterion 1e. Performed within past 5 years	SubCriterion 2e. Performed within past 5 years	SubCriterion 3e. Performed within past 5 years
SubCriterion 1f. IMPACT II Prime Offeror or Subcontractor performed as either Prime or Subcontractor	SubCriterion 2f. IMPACT II Prime Offeror or Subcontractor performed as either Prime or Subcontractor	SubCriterion 3f. IMPACT II Prime Offeror performed as Prime

*Id.*

The solicitation explained that “[o]ne Corporate Experience Reference may meet parts or all of multiple Criterion, or multiple Corporate Experience References may be required to meet one Criterion.” *Id.* Furthermore, the RFP stated that “[a]ll provided experiences must cumulatively meet all aspects of each Criterion” and that “[e]ach individual reference shall meet one or more SubCriterion.” *Id.* Finally, the solicitation explained that “[m]ore than one Corporate Experience Reference shall not be used to meet one individual SubCriterion.” *Id.*

The RFP instructed that for each reference, an offeror must include contact information for that reference, a “brief description of the services and facilities provided[,] and identification of which criteria are met by the experience.” *Id.* Moreover, the solicitation explained that proposals “must be clear, coherent, and prepared in sufficient detail for effective evaluation[,]” and “must include convincing rationale and substantiation of all claims.” *Id.* at 07597. TSA would compare an offeror’s reference to the three criteria identified in the solicitation to determine if that offeror had performed on contracts that met those criteria. *Id.* at 07599.

The record reflects that TSA undertook a new evaluation of the protester’s corporate experience references. See AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15031-15057. The CET explained that it analyzed each submitted reference “within each criterion to identify the qualities of the Offeror’s experience[.]” *Id.* at 15031. The CET further provided that it examined the narrative details presented by an offeror when assessing strengths and weaknesses. *Id.*

In conducting its evaluation, the CET assigned 16 strengths and 31 weaknesses to CACI’s corporate experience. *Id.* at 15030-15056. The CET found that CACI’s references, collectively, failed to satisfy three of the eighteen sub-criterion identified in the RFP, namely 1b, 2c, and 3c. *Id.* at 15057. Concerning 1b, the CET explained that it found CACI’s “end user support references insufficient in its presentation of mobile device support[.]” *Id.* Concerning sub-criterion 2c, the evaluators stated that all the

server infrastructure references provided were “weak in comparison to the size, scope and complexity of the [instant] requirements.” *Id.* Finally, the CET explained that the protester’s references related to sub-criterion 3c “did not provide clarity to substantiate [CACI’s] relevant experience.” *Id.*

On this record, we find no basis to sustain CACI’s protest allegations challenging the agency’s evaluation of corporate experience. First, contrary to the protester’s argument, we find reasonable the agency’s assignment of weaknesses based on CACI’s failure to provide sufficient detail in its narrative explanation. Protest at 16-19; Comments at 13-14; Supp. Comments at 8-9. Specifically, the protester challenges seven instances where TSA assigned a weakness based on CACI’s failure to adequately illustrate its experience. See Protest at 17-18. In its view, the weaknesses were unreasonable because the RFP did not require offerors to provide the level of detail sought by the agency. *Id.* at 16.

In our view, however, TSA’s assignment of the weaknesses at issue reasonably stem from the protester’s failure to provide germane information. Taking one representative example from the protester’s allegations, concerning finding 37, TSA assigned a weakness based on CACI’s lack of a detailed narrative for its submitted reference 4, relating to sub-criterion 2c (1,000 servers in a hybrid environment).<sup>7</sup> AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15050. In its proposal, CACI provided that it “maintains more than 25,000 workstations, 1,500 physical and virtual servers, 100+ [local/wide area network] connections, 8,000 network devices, and a [continuity of operations] site.” AR, Tab 28, CACI Corporate Experience Proposal at 11406. In assigning a weakness, the CET explained:

The narrative lacks discussion about data center operations and server support as is required within this Sub-criterion. The support in this area appears to be “[network operations center]” and “[security operations center]” support only which is lacking in comparison to the requirements. There was not sufficient detail provided in the narrative to substantiate the size, scope and complexity of the Sub-criterion requirement. For example, servers, storage, databases, backups, data center and other areas outside of the network discussion were absent, therefore, there was not sufficient evidence to determine the relevance of this reference in size, scope and complexity as the IMPACT II requirements.

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<sup>7</sup> The solicitation required offerors to propose a performance work statement (PWS) that would be incorporated into the task order. RFP at 07454. The RFP required an offeror’s PWS to meet six identified objectives and seven specified tasks. AR, Tab 12a, SOO, amend. 11 at 07775-07776. As relevant to experience sub-criterion 2c, task two (IT operations and maintenance) required (among other things) support and operation of on-site and cloud environments, which included the operation and maintenance of servers and data centers. *Id.* at 07781- 07800.



AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15050. The protester offers no evidence or information as to why the CET's findings do not reasonably relate to the evaluation criterion at issue (concerning servers in a hybrid environment), but only asserts that the weakness was "premised on unstated criteria." Protest at 17. We disagree; the agency's assignment of a weakness stems from CACI's failure to provide information reasonably related to the sub-criterion. See *Emagine IT, Inc.*, B-420202, B-420202.2, Dec. 30, 2021, 2022 CPD ¶ 20 at 9 (contracting agencies reasonably may take into account considerations, even if unstated, that are reasonably related to or encompassed by the stated evaluation criteria). CACI's challenges are denied.

Second, the protester challenges the agency's assignment of 11 additional weaknesses because in the protester's view, TSA, contrary to the terms of the RFP, unreasonably required CACI to substantiate affirmative representations in its corporate experience proposal. Protest at 19-22; Comments at 14-24; Supp. Comments at 9-11. CACI contends TSA held the protester to a much higher standard than was required in the solicitation by demanding detailed explanations related to claims and assertions made in its proposal. In the alternative, CACI argues that even if the RFP required this level of detail, CACI provided sufficient information in its narrative descriptions to meet this standard. In response, TSA contends that the RFP plainly required offerors to illustrate and explain their experience and that its evaluation conclusions were reasonable. MOL at 8-9.

We agree with TSA that the agency's evaluation conclusions, in this regard, are unobjectionable. As noted above, the RFP required offerors to "illustrate" their experience by providing a "brief description of the services and facilities provided" under those references and to identify which criteria are met by the experience. RFP at 07582. Additionally, the solicitation explained that proposals "must be clear, coherent, and prepared in sufficient detail for effective evaluation[.]" and "must include convincing rationale and substantiation of all claims."<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 07597. Moreover, the RFP provided:

Offerors are further advised that references to similar work previously performed by the Offeror will not receive favorable evaluation unless the relevance of that previous work to the objectives of this RFP is explained in detail, including a description of how the methods employed in the previous work experience will be applied to these objectives to result in successful contract performance.

*Id.* at 07579. Accordingly, based on the totality of the solicitation, offerors were reasonably put on notice that they had a responsibility to explain (or substantiate) the underlying work performed on those references.

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<sup>8</sup> We find unpersuasive the protester's argument that this general instruction--identified as part of the evaluation criteria for all factors--is inapplicable to corporate experience proposals. Supp. Comments at 10-11.

Accordingly, we also find unobjectionable the agency's assignment of weaknesses where the protester was deemed to have failed to substantiate elements in its proposal. As one emblematic example, concerning finding 4, TSA assigned CACI's first reference a weakness under sub-criterion 3c (experience in 25 locations) because the firm "did not substantiate their experience in relation to this Sub-criterion." AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15035. The CET explained that CACI did "not detail infrastructure and end user support relevant to the size, scope and complexity" to this requirement, the "reference lacked an effective description as to what end user and mobile device support was being provided during contract performance[.]" and CACI's "discussion was also noticeably lacking regarding engineering and operations and maintenance functions of both network and server infrastructure[.]" *Id.* The CET concluded that "[b]ecause of the absence of supporting details, the evaluators noted this area as a weakness." *Id.*

CACI points to various provisions in its proposal that, in its view, provides sufficient narrative to substantiate its experience. See e.g., Protest at 20 (noting, among other things, that CACI "delivers End User Support to 65,000+ end users[.]"); Comments at 18-19. However, in our view, CACI's generalized proposal references do not reasonably provide the substantiating information TSA viewed as lacking. See CET Member Declaration at 3-4 (noting that CACI's referenced proposal sections provide "a recitation of quantities, but does not illustrate (*i.e.* substantiate) experience in similar activities to fulfill" TSA's requirements.). As we have explained, it is an offeror's responsibility to submit a well-written proposal, with adequately detailed information, which clearly demonstrates compliance with the solicitation requirements and allows a meaningful review by the procuring agency. *STG, Inc.*, B-411415, B-411415.2, July 22, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 240 at 5-7. Here, the protester's argument reflects its disagreement with the agency's assessment concerning the level of detail provided in the firm's proposal. As such, we have no basis to object to the CET's concerns regarding CACI's failure to substantiate or otherwise provide sufficient information about its experience. These allegations are denied.

Third, we find similarly unpersuasive CACI's challenges to several other weaknesses assigned by TSA. See Protest at 28-33; Comments at 27-28. As an initial matter, the relative merits of an offeror's corporate experience information is generally within the broad discretion of the contracting agency. See *Paragon Tech. Group, Inc.*, B-407331, Dec.18, 2012, 2013 CPD ¶ 11 at 5. A protester's disagreement with the agency's judgment does not establish that an evaluation was unreasonable. *FN Mfg., LLC*, B-402059.4, B-402059.5, Mar. 22, 2010, 2010 CPD ¶ 104 at 7.

Examining one representative example, concerning finding 25, the agency assigned CACI's third corporate experience a weakness under sub-criterion 2c (1,000 servers in a hybrid environment). See AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15044-45. The protester contends TSA "found a handful of seemingly random problems with CACI's narrative" and "focused on infrastructure-related minutiae that Offerors had no reason to believe were specific requirements" that were to be addressed. Protest at 30-31. However, as explained by CET, the weakness was assigned due to CACI's

lack of detail, explanation, and substantiation, to the point where the agency “could not determine [the] relevancy” of the protester’s reference. AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15045; see also CET Member’s Declaration at 5-6. While the protester may believe that its proposal did include sufficient information to not warrant the assignment of a weakness, in this regard, the protester’s disagreement, without more, does not establish that the evaluation was unreasonable. *DEI Consulting*, B-401258, July 13, 2009, 2009 CPD ¶ 151 at 2.

The protester also challenges the agency’s assignment of several weakness to its corporate experience proposal where a given, single, reference failed to meet a particular sub-criterion. Protest at 15-16; Comments at 11-13; Supp. Comments at 6-7. CACI contends that the RFP did not permit such an evaluation. Instead, rather than an individual reference needing to meet each of the 18 sub-criteria, individually, the RFP explained that an offeror’s references, collectively, had to meet the criteria. Thus, CACI contends in eight instances, “the Agency assessed a Weakness to one CACI reference for failing to substantiate experience related to a specific SubCriterion, even though CACI did not even claim the references supported the particular experience the Agency found unsubstantiated.” Supp. Comments at 7.

Based on the cumulative nature of the agency’s evaluation of CACI’s corporate experience, we find it is unnecessary to decide whether TSA reasonably assigned these eight weaknesses. In this regard, CACI cannot establish a reasonable possibility of competitive prejudice, even if we were to conclude that these weaknesses were assigned in error. Competitive prejudice is an essential element of any viable protest; where the protester fails to demonstrate that, but for the agency’s actions, it would have had a substantial chance of receiving the award, there is no basis for finding prejudice, and our Office will not sustain the protest, even if deficiencies in the procurement are found. *AdvanceMed Corp.*, B-415360 *et al.*, Dec. 19, 2017, 2018 CPD ¶ 4 at 10; *DynCorp Int’l LLC*, *supra* at 12-13.

Here, the record demonstrates that TSA reasonably determined that CACI’s five submitted references cumulatively failed to meet the three corporate experience criteria established in the RFP, specifically by not satisfying sub-criteria 1b, 2c, and 3c. See AR, Tab 36, CACI Revised CET Evaluation at 15057. It was CACI’s failure, in this regard, along with Perspecta’s discriminating strengths for its offered experience, that underlie TSA’s determination that Perspecta represented the better value under the corporate experience factor. AR, Tab 41, Revised SSEB Tradeoff Analysis at 15125; AR, Tab 38, Revised SSDD at 15084-15085. The eight assigned weaknesses at issue, here, were not considered as discriminators and did not (either independently or collectively) influence the tradeoff or selection decision. *Id.* Accordingly, this protest allegation is denied because CACI has failed to demonstrate that it suffered competitive prejudice through the agency’s assignment of these eight weaknesses.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> CACI also contends that TSA’s evaluation is unreasonable because it is inconsistent with the agency’s earlier evaluation in 2021. Protest at 23-24; Comments at 24-25;

## Best-Value Tradeoff Determination

CACI also contends the agency's best-value tradeoff determination was flawed. In this regard, the protester argues the agency failed to qualitatively compare offerors' proposals in the tradeoff--under both the experience factor and across all factors, as a whole. Moreover, CACI challenges the sufficiency of the analysis in the tradeoff report, arguing that TSA's conclusions are conclusory. In the protester's view, TSA effectively treated corporate experience as pass/fail in the tradeoff, resulting in a flawed selection decision. Protest at 12-14; Comments at 3-8; Supp. Comments at 3-6.

Where, as here, a solicitation provides for issuance of a task order on a best-value tradeoff basis, it is the function of the SSA to perform a price/technical tradeoff. *Alliant Enter. JV, LLC*, B-410352.5, B-410352.6, July 1, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 209 at 13. An agency has broad discretion in making a tradeoff between price and non-price factors, and the extent to which one may be sacrificed for the other is governed only by the tests of rationality and consistency with the solicitation's stated evaluation criteria. *Id.* at 14. There is no need for extensive documentation of every consideration factored into a tradeoff decision. FAR 16.505(b)(7); *Lockheed Martin Integrated Sys., Inc.*, B-408134.3, B-408134.5, July 3, 2013, 2013 CPD ¶1 69 at 10. Rather, the documentation need only be sufficient to establish that the agency was aware of the relative merits and costs of the competing proposals and that the source selection was reasonably based. *Id.* A protester's disagreement with the agency's determination,

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Supp. Comments at 11-16. In this regard, the protester argues that in passing from phase one to phase two of the competition, TSA determined that CACI met all eighteen sub-criteria, but upon the agency's revised evaluation (following our Office's sustain decision), the agency concluded that CACI failed to meet three sub-criteria. We find the agency's evaluation to be unobjectionable, in this regard. First, TSA's 2021 phase one evaluation was merely a pass/fail analysis as to whether the protester met the RFP's stated experience criteria. Here, on the other hand, the agency undertook a qualitative evaluation of offerors' corporate experience, determining that CACI failed to substantiate its experience in three sub-criteria. Thus, unlike the decisions cited by the protester, the two evaluations at issue here were materially different examinations.

Second, even if the two evaluations could be construed as an apples-to-apples comparison, the agency notes that this evaluation team is materially different from the one from 2021. MOL at 9-10 (noting that two members of the evaluation team changed). Our Office has recognized that it is not unusual for different evaluators, or groups of evaluators, to reach different conclusions and assign different scores or ratings when evaluating proposals, since both objective and subjective judgments are involved. *MILVETS Sys. Tech., Inc.*, B-409051.7, B-409051.9, Jan. 29, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 53 at 7. Accordingly, we find no basis to conclude that TSA's evaluation was defective because the agency did not provide an explanation for the different evaluation conclusions.

without more, does not establish that the evaluation or source selection was unreasonable. *Engility Corp.*, *supra* at 16.

Following the CET's evaluation of offerors' corporate experience, the SSEB conducted a revised tradeoff analysis. See AR, Tab 41, Revised SSEB Tradeoff Analysis. The SSEB explained that its tradeoff compared "the relative merits of each proposal including key elements, characteristics (Strengths, Deficiencies, Significant Weaknesses, Weaknesses, Risks, and Price), and the benefits and risks offered." *Id.* at 15123. The SSEB's report also provides that "omitted Strengths were not key discriminators and did not offer impactful advantages to TSA." *Id.*

After it "compared the merits of the Offeror's proposal and the benefits and risks[.]" the SSEB determined that Perspecta represented the best value to the government. *Id.* at 015124-015125. In so concluding, the SSEB noted that Perspecta, the lowest-priced offeror, also was superior to CACI under all factors. *Id.* Specific to corporate experience, the SSEB stated that "Perspecta's proposal is assessed to have less risk than CACI's." *Id.* at 15125. To support this conclusion, the SSEB explained that CACI did not substantiate its experience in three of the eighteen sub-criteria areas identified in the RFP, whereas Perspecta did. *Id.* Moreover, the SSEB noted that while TSA found that both offerors had impactful strengths, Perspecta had impactful strengths in two sub-criteria (sub-criteria 1b and 2c) where CACI failed to substantiate its experience. *Id.* The SSEB concluded the identified strengths for CACI's experience "do not outweigh the risk created by not substantiating experience all of the sub-criteria areas." *Id.*

We find unobjectionable the agency's tradeoff analysis and conclusions. First, contrary to the protester's assertion, the record demonstrates that TSA did undertake a qualitative analysis of the offerors' proposals. Indeed, the SSEB understood the strengths and weaknesses of both CACI's and Perspecta's proposals, and identified the offerors' impactful strengths. AR, Tab 41, Revised SSEB Tradeoff Analysis at 15125. In the SSEB's view, the risk associated with CACI's proposal--where the protester did not substantiate its experience in three sub-criteria--was not otherwise offset by CACI's assigned strengths. *Id.* Where Perspecta's proposal did not contain the same elevated risk of unsuccessful performance (as Perspecta substantiated all the experience sub-criteria and had two notable impactful strengths), TSA reasonably determined that Perspecta represented the better value to the agency. *Id.* While the record does not demonstrate the agency executed a point-by-point comparison of each strength and weakness associated with the proposals, such an examination is not required under a FAR subpart 16.5 procurement. See *Worldwide Info. Network Sys., Inc.*, B-408548, Nov. 1, 2013, 2013 CPD ¶ 254 at 6 (there is no need for extensive documentation of every consideration factored into a tradeoff decision). Here, we find the SSEB's

conclusions to be reasonable, and find no merit in the allegation the agency failed to conduct a comparative analysis of proposals. As such, this protest ground is denied.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, we find no merit in the protester's challenge to the TSA's tradeoff, as a whole. TSA, in its first evaluation of proposals in 2021, determined that Perspecta's proposal was superior under the technical, approach, and price factors, and was equal to CACI under corporate experience (under a pass/fail analysis); the agency deemed Perspecta as representing the best value to the agency. *CACI, Inc.-Federal, supra* at 4. Following the issuance of our Office's decision on CACI's earlier protest, the agency undertook a qualitative evaluation of offerors' corporate experience, consistent with that decision's recommendation. Through that evaluation, TSA concluded that Perspecta's proposal was superior to CACI's under the experience factor, as well. See AR, Tab 41, Revised SSEB Tradeoff Analysis at 15125. Where, as here, the highest-rated, lowest-priced proposal is selected for award in a best-value procurement, a tradeoff is not required. *Dell Servs. Fed. Govt., Inc.*, B-412340, *et al.*, Jan. 20, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 43 at 7 n.6; *Alliance Tech. Servs., Inc.*, B-311329, B-311329.2, May 30, 2008, 2008 CPD ¶ 108 at 3. Accordingly, as no tradeoff analysis was required to be produced by TSA, we find unobjectionable the agency's ultimate conclusion that Perspecta represented the best value to the agency.<sup>11</sup>

The protest is denied.

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General Counsel

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<sup>10</sup> Contrary to the protester's assertions, the record does not reflect that the agency's treatment of corporate experience in the tradeoff analysis amounted to a pass/fail consideration. Comments at 8-9. Instead, the record illustrates that TSA was aware of and considered the strengths and weaknesses of proposals. Ultimately, the risk associated with CACI's proposal (as reflected by its failure to substantiate three of the eighteen corporate experience sub-criteria) was not offset by its assigned strengths. Tab 41, Revised SSEB Tradeoff Analysis at 15125. We are unpersuaded that TSA's conclusion--that CACI's failure to substantiate its experience represented a heightened risk of unsuccessful performance--was tantamount to a pass/fail evaluation. See *id.*

<sup>11</sup> We find similarly unobjectionable the SSA's conclusions, in this regard. See AR, Tab 38, Revised SSDD at 15084-15085.