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Decision

Matter of: Assisted Building Solutions, LLC

File: B-423895; B-423895.2

Date: January 8, 2026

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Harold Askins, Esq., and Scott J. McGuigan, Esq., Department of the Navy, for the agency.

Christine Martin, Esq., and Tania Calhoun, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

1. Protest that the agency unreasonably evaluated the protester's proposal is denied where the record shows the agency reasonably conducted its evaluation in accordance with the terms of the solicitation.
 2. Protest that the agency conducted a flawed best-value tradeoff analysis is denied where the record shows the agency looked behind adjectival ratings and compared the relative merits of proposals.
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DECISION

Assisted Building Solutions, LLC, (ABS) a small business of Frisco, Texas, protests the award of a contract to CenCore, LLC, a small business of Springville, Utah, under request for proposals (RFP) No. N6523625R3800, issued by the Department of the Navy, Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic (NIWC), for the design and installation of prefabricated secure modular buildings. ABS asserts that the agency unreasonably evaluated its proposal and conducted a flawed best-value tradeoff.

We deny the protest.

BACKGROUND

The Navy issued the RFP on June 3, 2025, as a total small business set-aside, pursuant to Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 12.6 and part 15, for the design, fabrication, delivery, and installation of up to eight relocatable, prefabricated secure modular facilities at NIWC Atlantic in Charleston, South Carolina. Agency Report (AR), Tab 3, RFP at 1-2; AR, Tab 7, Business Clearance Memorandum at 4. These facilities were required to be compliant with Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 705 so that sensitive compartmented information (SCI)¹ could be processed and managed in the facilities. RFP, Statement of Work (SOW) at ¶ 1.1.

The RFP contemplated the award of an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract. The contract is to be performed over five years with orders to be delivered in less than 24 months. RFP at 1, 3. Award was to be made to the offeror providing the best value to the agency considering price, which was to be evaluated for fairness and reasonableness, and two non-price factors: technical approach and past performance.² *Id.* at 5, 7. Technical approach was significantly more important than price. *Id.*

Under the technical approach factor, offerors were to demonstrate an approach to providing all management, labor, equipment, and material necessary for the design, construction, delivery, and installation of the facilities. SOW at ¶ 1.1. An offeror's approach had to include drawings, material lists, and a demonstration of compliance with ICD 705. RFP at 3. As relevant, ICD 705 has various requirements including that the offeror's facility must have 80-decibel (dB) radio frequency (RF) attenuation, and two doors that are both 80dB RF attenuated. SOW at ¶ 5.3(a), (h). Proposals also had to include a detailed schedule for the design, fabrication, delivery, and installation of the first facility. This schedule needed to address all requirements in the RFP, including its attachments. RFP at 3. Also relevant here, attachment 9 of the RFP, construction security plan, described the delivery requirements the contractor must meet. RFP, attach. 9, Construction Security Plan at ¶ 3.2.

Proposals would be evaluated based on whether the proposed design and schedule met the terms of the RFP, including all attachments and SOW requirements, including the ICD 705 requirements. RFP at 6. Proposals would receive ratings of outstanding, good, acceptable, marginal, or unacceptable under this factor. *Id.* at 5-6.

The agency received five proposals, including those of ABS and CenCore. The agency evaluated the proposals submitted by ABS and CenCore as follows:

¹ SCI is a classification level used to protect highly sensitive information related to national security that requires strict access controls and special handling procedures. Contracting Officer's Statement and Memorandum of Law (COS/MOL) at 12.

² The past performance factor is not at issue here.

	Technical Approach	Past Performance	Total Price
ABS	Acceptable	Acceptable	\$19,733,840
CenCore	Outstanding	Acceptable	\$43,599,840

COS/MOL at 2; AR, Tab 6, Source Selection Decision Document (SSDD) at 4.

The source selection evaluation board (SSEB) evaluated proposals under all factors. Under the technical approach factor, the SSEB assessed ABS's proposal one significant strength, three strengths, one significant weakness, one weakness, and no deficiencies. AR, Tab 5, SSEB Report at 5-6. The SSEB assessed ABS's proposal the significant weakness for failing to address the requirements for 80dB RF attenuation for the facilities and their doors. *Id.* at 10. The SSEB noted that these omissions increased the risk to the government because the government could not be sure that ABS intended to meet these requirements, which are essential to the agency's security needs. *Id.* The SSEB also assessed ABS's proposal the weakness for its failure to include a transportation security plan for delivery of the facilities. *Id.* The SSEB noted that the absence of this plan increased the likelihood of a delayed accreditation process. *Id.* Considering these two weaknesses with the other strengths assigned, the SSEB concluded that ABS's proposal merited an overall rating of acceptable. *Id.* at 9.

In its evaluation of CenCore's proposal under the technical approach factor, the SSEB assessed the proposal three significant strengths, one strength, and no significant weaknesses, weaknesses, or deficiencies. AR, Tab 6, SSDD at 4. The SSEB determined that CenCore's proposal merited a rating of outstanding. *Id.* at 6.

The source selection authority (SSA) reviewed the merits of both proposals. Regarding their technical approaches, the SSA first reviewed several of ABS's strengths. The SSA noted that several of ABS's offerings were appealing to the agency, [DELETED]. *Id.* at 7. Regarding the weaknesses, the SSA noted that ABS's failure to address the requirements to provide facilities and doors that were 80db RF attenuated increased the risk to the government that ABS's facilities might not be compliant with ICD 705. *Id.* at 7. The SSA further noted that ABS's failure to provide a transportation security plan created significant risk for the government as it could not fully assess the specifics of ABS's approach to transporting the facilities, meaning that the government might not receive a fully operational, ICD 705-accredited facility. *Id.*

In comparing the proposals, the SSA noted that each received a strength for their approaches to facility installation and these strengths canceled each other out. *Id.* at 8. The SSA then noted that CenCore's proposal had several additional offerings that were appealing to the agency beyond what ABS offered, and CenCore's approach had none of the weaknesses that ABS's did. The SSA concluded that while ABS's proposal did have strengths, it did not provide the government with anything more than adequate confidence in its performance. The SSA concluded that as the technical approach factor was the most important and the government had greater confidence in CenCore's approach, CenCore's approach was preferable to ABS's. *Id.*

Regarding price, the government calculated an independent government estimate (IGE) of \$44,000,000. AR, Tab 7, Business Clearance Memorandum at 5. The agency compared ABS's and CenCore's prices to the IGE, market research, and the other offerors' prices. The agency noted that ABS's price was significantly lower than the IGE and all other offerors' prices. The agency also noted that although CenCore's price was at a significant premium compared to ABS's, CenCore's price was very similar to the IGE and other offerors' prices. The agency concluded that CenCore's price was fair and reasonable. The SSA determined that CenCore's proposal provided the best value to the government overall. AR, Tab 6, SSDD at 15.

On August 22, the agency notified ABS and the remaining offerors that CenCore was the apparent awardee. COS/MOL at 9. On August 29, the agency provided ABS with an unsuccessful offeror notice and a post-award debriefing. This protest followed.

DISCUSSION

ABS challenges the evaluation of its proposal under the technical approach factor and the agency's best-value tradeoff decision. We have reviewed all protest contentions and find that none provide us a basis to sustain the protest. We note at the outset that in reviewing protests challenging the evaluation of an offeror's proposal, it is not our role to reevaluate proposals; rather, our Office examines the record to determine whether the agency's judgment was reasonable, and in accordance with solicitation criteria and applicable procurement statutes and regulations. *Akima Facilities Operations, LLC*, B-421584, July 6, 2023, 2023 CPD ¶ 170 at 4. A protester's disagreement with the agency's assessment, without more, does not render the evaluation unreasonable. *Id.*

Technical Approach

ABS argues that the agency unreasonably assessed its proposal a significant weakness for failing to address the requirements to provide facilities and doors with 80dB RF attenuation. ABS asserts that it was not required to state that it would meet these exact specifications, and even if it was, its proposal demonstrated that it would meet these requirements. ABS contends that its proposal committed to providing facilities that were fully compliant with ICD 705, which necessarily included 80dB RF attenuation. ABS points to the portion of its proposal that states that it will provide, at a minimum, 60dB RF attenuation. ABS also argues that it "never stated that it would not comply with the RFP requirements." Protester's Supp. Comments at 7.

The agency responds that it reasonably assigned a significant weakness to ABS's proposal. The agency contends that the RFP expressly required facilities with 80dB RF attenuation and two doors per facility that were also 80dB RF attenuated. The agency asserts that the evaluation criteria were clear that proposals would be evaluated based on whether they complied with ICD 705, which included these requirements. The agency contends that ABS's proposal did not clearly demonstrate that it would meet these requirements and as a result the agency lacked confidence in ABS's performance and reasonably assessed its proposal a significant weakness. COS/MOL at 12-16.

We find that the agency reasonably assigned the significant weakness. As stated above, our Office does not reevaluate the proposals or substitute our judgment for that of agency evaluators; rather, we review the record to determine whether the agency's evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the solicitation's evaluation criteria. *Buffalo Computer Graphics, Inc.*, B-416244, July 17, 2018, 2018 CPD ¶ 247 at 5. First, we find that the RFP expressly required 80dB RF attenuation for the facilities and the two doors. SOW at ¶ 5.3(a), (h) ("Provide ICD-705 compliant secure facility with 80dB RF attenuation . . ."), ("Include a minimum of (2ea) 80 dB doors to meet life/safety egress requirements."). The RFP stated several times that it was critical that offerors address all requirements related to ICD 705, which are specific and significant because of the security needs of the agency. See, e.g., RFP at 6 ("Failure to propose enough detail to prove compliance with ICD 705 may be defined as a deficiency with may result in a rating of 'Unacceptable'").

Next, we find that the agency reasonably determined that ABS's proposal did not clearly address these two requirements. ABS cites various sections of its proposal to support its argument that its proposal met these requirements. In particular, ABS points to a section stating that ABS will "provide a minimum of 60dB of attenuation," and various other sections stating that it will meet all ICD 705 requirements and RF attenuation. AR, Tab 4, ABS's Proposal at 8-9, 10. Providing a minimum of 60dB of attenuation, however, is not a clear promise to meet the 80dB requirement. Rather, it merely expresses a promise to provide no less than 60dB of attenuation whereas the agency required a facility with at least 80dB of attenuation. An offeror bears the burden of submitting an adequately written proposal, and it runs the risk that its proposal will be evaluated unfavorably when it fails to do so. *Data Matrix Solutions, Inc.*, B-412520, Mar. 14, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 87 at 5. It was ABS's responsibility to ensure that its proposal clearly conveyed it would meet each specific requirement. It was not the agency's responsibility to assume that ABS's general statements that it would meet ICD 705 requirements and provide at least 60dB RF attenuation meant that it would meet the higher standard required. As the record shows that ABS's proposal did not clearly demonstrate that it would meet the 80dB RF attenuation requirements, we find unobjectionable the agency's decision to assess a significant weakness.

ABS next argues that the agency unreasonably assessed its technical proposal a weakness for failing to include a transportation security plan because the RFP did not require such a plan. Because no plan was required, ABS contends that the assignment of the weakness constituted the application of an unstated evaluation criterion by the agency. Comments & Supp. Protest at 12. ABS also argues that its proposal met the RFP's more general requirement to address delivery because its proposal included a "Haul Routes" section that described its intention to develop a delivery plan. *Id.* at 14.

The agency responds that it reasonably assessed ABS's proposal a weakness for failing to include a transportation security plan. The agency contends that the RFP required offerors to describe in detail their approach to delivering the facilities, which included how offerors would maintain security during transportation. The agency

asserts that while ABS's proposal included a section called "Haul Routes," this section did not provide ABS's actual plan, but rather briefly describes how ABS will develop a plan for transporting the facilities. The agency also contends that even if the RFP were read as not expressly requiring this plan, its consideration of such a plan was proper because it is logically encompassed by the terms of the RFP and the evaluation criteria. COS/MOL at 16-20.

We find that the agency reasonably assessed a weakness to ABS's proposal. First, we agree with the agency that the RFP required offerors to propose a transportation security plan; that is, a plan for delivering facilities in accordance with all the terms of the RFP, including the security requirements. Where, as here, the parties disagree over the meaning of solicitation language, we will resolve the matter by reading the solicitation as a whole and in a manner that gives effect to all its provisions. *Akima, supra* at 5. To be reasonable, and therefore valid, an interpretation must be consistent with the solicitation when read as a whole and in a reasonable manner. *Id.* In reviewing whether an agency applied unstated evaluation criteria, our decisions explain that an agency is required to evaluate proposals based solely on the factors identified in the solicitation. *SOC LLC*, B-418487.2, B-418487.3, Feb. 4, 2021, 2021 CPD ¶ 75 at 9-10.

As stated above, proposals had to include a detailed schedule for the design, fabrication, delivery, and installation of the first facility. This schedule needed to address all requirements included in the RFP. RFP at 3. Attachment 9 of the RFP, construction security plan, described the delivery requirements the contractor must meet. As relevant here, attachment 9 stated as follows:

The manufacturer will ensure that each modular section is wrapped/protected against entry during transit, to include securing the load with a recorded serialized tamper/ball seal. Each transport vehicle will also have its physical location tracked by the manufacturer during transit from the manufacturing company's location until it reaches the NIWC Atlantic construction site, even if transportation takes more than one day. The manufacturer will provide NIWC Atlantic with a copy of each driver's commercial license information, the transport vehicle's Department of Transportation (DOT) information, the Government Bill of Lading (BIL), and the commercial transport vehicle's tracking information upon request. Upon delivery, these modular sections will be inspected for evidence of possible compromise by the [Site Security Manager (SSM)]. If any evidence of possible compromise is detected, the SSM will contact the [Accrediting Official (AO)].

RFP, attach. 9, Construction Security Plan at ¶ 3.2.

As also stated above, proposals would be evaluated under the technical approach factor based on whether the proposed design and schedule met the terms of the RFP, including all attachments. RFP at 6.

While the RFP did not specifically state that a transportation security plan had to be provided, it did state multiple times that offerors had to provide a detailed approach to the delivery of facilities and that proposals would be evaluated based, in part, on this approach. See e.g. RFP at 3 (“The offeror shall also propose a detailed schedule for the . . . delivery . . . of the first modular building.”), 6 (“The Government will evaluate the Offeror’s solution in the following areas: Delivery Schedule demonstrating the Offeror’s understanding of the requirements and the ability to fulfill them within proposed delivery terms.”). Part of attachment 9 goes into great detail about the security requirements that must be met during delivery. As a result, we conclude that the RFP required offerors to provide a detailed approach to the delivery of facilities, including addressing security requirements. Even if we were to conclude that the RFP did not require this plan explicitly, we would find that a transportation security plan was logically encompassed in the terms of the solicitation. An agency may apply evaluation considerations that are not expressly outlined in the RFP where those considerations are reasonably and logically encompassed within the stated evaluation criteria. *SOC LLC, supra*. Here, offerors could not submit a proposal that met the terms of the RFP without including a detailed plan for the delivery of facilities, which necessarily included addressing the unique security requirements that dictated the delivery process. *Id.* (although the RFP did not expressly require offerors to identify an in-country training facility, such a requirement was logically encompassed within the terms of the RFP because such a facility was essential to satisfying the in-country training responsibilities).

As we have determined that it was reasonable for the agency to consider whether ABS’s proposal included a transportation security plan, we now address whether the agency reasonably determined that ABS’s proposal lacked one. The record shows that while ABS’s proposal did include a section called “Haul Routes,” which described ABS’s intention to develop a plan for delivering the facilities, this section did not include an actual plan that addressed the delivery security requirements. AR, Tab 4, ABS’s Proposal at 10 (“ABS will coordinate, develop, and submit a comprehensive haul route plan . . .” and “[t]he haul route plan will include detailed maps, traffic control measures, . . . and safety mitigation strategies. The finalized plan will be submitted to the designated NIWC Atlantic point of contact . . .”).

Again, an offeror bears the burden of submitting an adequately written proposal, and it runs the risk that its proposal will be evaluated unfavorably where it fails to do so. *GeoSystems Analysis, Inc.*, B-413016, July 25, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 190 at 4-5. Because the record shows that ABS’s proposal did not include a transportation security plan, we have no basis to question the agency’s assessment of a weakness. *Id.* (denying protest that the agency unreasonably assessed a significant weakness to the protester’s proposal where the record showed that although the proposal discussed general capabilities, the proposal lacked a detailed approach to meeting certain tasks in the PWS).

Best-Value Tradeoff

Finally, ABS asserts that the agency did not meaningfully compare the proposals of ABS and CenCore when it selected CenCore's proposal for award. Protester's Supp. Comments at 2. The protester asserts the SSDD only repeats and tallies the strengths and weaknesses assessed to each proposal. *Id.* The protester cites various sections of the SSDD to support this claim and asserts that none identify what features of CenCore's proposal exceeded ABS's or why they warrant paying CenCore's price premium.³ *Id.* at 3-5.

We deny this protest allegation as these claims are not supported by the record. In a best-value tradeoff procurement, it is the function of the selection official to perform a tradeoff between non-price factors and evaluated prices; that is, to determine whether one proposal's technical superiority is worth its higher evaluated price. In doing so, the extent to which one is sacrificed for the other is governed only by the test of rationality and consistency with the stated evaluation criteria. *Midnight Sun-Centennial Sunnliag JV, LLC*, B-420583.4, May 11, 2023, 2023 CPD ¶ 118 at 6.

The record shows that the SSA considered the relative merits of each proposal and compared them. Curiously, one of the sections of the SSDD cited by ABS expressly describes the SSA's process of weighing the relative strengths and weaknesses of ABS's proposal to determine whether its technical approach was superior to that of CenCore's. Protester's Supp. Comments at 4; AR, Tab 6, SSDD at 8 ("Both ABS and

³ ABS also asserts that the SSA relied on mathematical errors in comparing ABS's price to other offerors' prices and therefore the price comparison is materially flawed. Protester's Supp. Comments at 6 (asserting, for example, that the agency incorrectly characterized ABS's price as 122.97 percent lower than the IGE and improperly excluded ABS's price from the calculation of the average price of all proposed prices because ABS's price was much lower). We dismiss this protest ground for failure to demonstrate competitive prejudice. 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. *International Business Machines Corp.*, B-420725.4, B-420725.5, Aug. 18, 2023, 2023 CPD ¶ 204 at 5.

Even if we were to find that the SSDD contained these mathematical errors, ABS does not make any claims that demonstrate the agency considered the wrong prices or was mistaken about the actual difference between prices. As a result, regardless of whether the SSDD included these alleged errors, the record shows that the SSA considered the correct prices, documented the analysis, and weighed the correct prices against the technical ratings. As the record also shows, technical approach was significantly more important than price and ABS's significantly lower price did not outweigh its technical shortcomings. Thus, ABS cannot establish that it was prejudiced by the alleged errors.

Cencore received a strength for installation of ACS/ICD devices so those strengths balance each other out . . . ABS's lack of detail regarding the perimeter door RF attenuation increases the risk to schedule, cost, and success of this requirement . . . ABS's proposal did receive a significant strength related to RF testing onsite after delivery . . . ABS's proposed technical approach did not provide the government more than adequate confidence that they could design and manufacture a facility that could achieve ICD 705 compliance.""). Additionally, ABS seemingly ignores an entire page of the SSA's tradeoff analysis in which the SSA considered each of the SSEB's findings for ABS's proposal. AR, Tab 6, SSDD at 7. The best-value tradeoff ultimately reflects the SSA's determination that the weaknesses in ABS's proposal, despite the cost savings, made ABS's proposal inferior in value to CenCore's, which had no weaknesses and provided the government a high degree of confidence. *Id.* at 7-8. The protest does not provide any basis to question the propriety of the agency's selection decision.

The protest is denied.

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