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Decision

Matter of: Centerline Logistics Corporation

File: B-423838; B-423838.2

Date: January 7, 2026

Lawrence P. Block, Esq., Bryant Gardner, Esq., Elizabeth Leavy, Esq., and Michael Hill, Esq., Winston & Strawn LLP, for the protester.

Jayna M. Rust, Esq., Thompson Coburn LLP, for the intervenor.

Isabelle Cutting, Esq., Hector RiveraHernandez, Esq., Stephen W. Adamsky, Esq., Todd P. Federici, Esq., and W. Craig Mullen, Esq., Department of the Air Force, for the agency.

Janis R. Millete, Esq., and John Sorrenti, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

1. Protest challenging the agency's evaluation of offerors' past/present performance is denied where it was reasonable and consistent with the solicitation's evaluation criteria.
 2. Protest that the agency did not conduct meaningful discussions by failing to address the relevance of the protester's past/present performance is denied. The agency did not identify any deficiencies or significant weaknesses based on its evaluation of the relevance of the protester's past/present performance therefore the agency was not required to raise the relevance of the protester's past/present performance during discussions.
 3. Protest that the agency engaged in disparate treatment in evaluating past/present performance is denied where the record shows that the difference in the evaluation is the result of differences in the proposals.
 4. Protest that agency's best-value tradeoff decision was unreasonable is denied where we find the agency's underlying evaluation to be reasonable.
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DECISION

Centerline Logistics Corporation of Seattle, Washington, protests the award of a contract to Vane Line Bunkering, LLC, of Baltimore, Maryland, under request for proposals (RFP) No. HTC71125-R-W001, issued by the Department of the Air Force on

behalf of the United States (U.S.) Transportation Command, for fuel transportation services. Centerline challenges the agency's past/present performance evaluation, argues that the agency failed to conduct meaningful discussions, and asserts the agency's best-value tradeoff is flawed. Protest at 1-2.

We deny the protest.

BACKGROUND

The agency issued the RFP on March 4, 2025, pursuant to the procedures of Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) parts 12 and 15. Agency Report (AR), Tab 3, RFP at 1; Contracting Officer's Statement (COS) at 2.¹ The RFP contemplated the award of a fixed-price contract for a 1-year base period and four 1-year option periods. RFP at 3-22, 68; COS at 2. The contract will provide transportation of Department of Defense-owned bulk jet fuel, marine diesel, and commercial fuel between various ports by tug and barge.² AR, Tab 4, PWS at 4.

Award was to be made on the basis of a best-value, performance-price tradeoff considering five factors: (1) business proposal; (2) technical capability; (3) past/present performance; (4) price; and (5) small business utilization.³ RFP at 44. The RFP established that past/present performance will be evaluated approximately equal to price; the business proposal and technical capability subfactors; and small business utilization factor will be rated on an acceptable/unacceptable basis. *Id.* Price would be evaluated but not rated and all evaluation factors other than price, when combined, would be approximately equal to price. *Id.*

The agency received two proposals, from the awardee and protester. Both offerors' proposals received ratings of acceptable for the business, technical capability, and small business utilization factors. AR, Tab 43, Source Selection Decision Document (SSDD) at 2. As relevant here, the differences in the offerors' past/present performance ratings and overall price were as follows:

¹ Citations to documents in the record are to Adobe PDF numbers provided by the agency in its report, unless otherwise noted.

² The solicitation referred to jet fuel as JP5; marine diesel as F76; and commercial fuel as Jet-A; and explained that fuel transportation was required between ports on the Atlantic and Gulf Coast. Performance Work Statement (PWS) at 4.

³ The business proposal factor was divided into two subfactors: proposal compliance and use of United States shipyards; and the technical capability factor was divided into three subfactors: equipment, management operations, and contractor confirmation checklist. RFP at 44.

	Centerline	Vane
Past/Present Performance	Satisfactory Confidence	Substantial Confidence
Price	\$202,908,858.22	\$203,300,742.22

AR, Tab 41, Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) Report at 8; AR, Tab 43, SSDD at 1-2.

Based on Vane’s superior past/present performance and the small difference in price, the agency selected Vane for award. AR, Tab 43, SSDD at 2. In particular, the agency stated “[d]ue to the critical nature of the fuel transported under this contract, specifically aviation fuel, in support of military operations and national defense, Vane’s superior past/present performance and experience moving aviation fuel, outweighs the very small cost difference and is proportionate to the benefits of service superiority for this requirement.” *Id.*

The agency notified Centerline that its proposal was unsuccessful and provided the protester a written debriefing on August 11. Protest at 2. At the conclusion of the debriefing process, Centerline filed this protest.

DISCUSSION

Centerline challenges several aspects of the agency’s evaluation of its proposal and the awardee’s proposal under the past/present performance factor.⁴ Centerline mainly argues that the agency applied unstated criteria in its past/present performance evaluation, disparately evaluated Vane and Centerline’s past/present performance, and failed to consider “too close-at-hand” negative performance deficiencies of the awardee. Protest at 8-16; Comments and Supp. Protest at 2-15. The protester also argues the agency failed to engage in meaningful discussions by not advising the protester that it considered the protester’s past/present performance information less relevant because its past performance did not include the transportation of aviation fuel. Finally, the protester contends that the best-value tradeoff was flawed. Protest at 16; Comments

⁴ Centerline withdrew four of its protest grounds, specifically that (1) the agency failed to document its past/present performance evaluation; (2) the agency used an undisclosed evaluation criteria to determine “very relevant” past/present performance references; (3) the awardee misrepresented the number of types of locations in one of its past/present performance questionnaires (PPQs); and (4) that the awardee proposed a vessel without a required certificate of documentation. Comments and Supp. Protest at 1; Supp. Comments at 1.

and Supp. Protest at 26. Although we do not discuss every argument raised, we have reviewed each issue and conclude that none presents a basis to sustain the protest.⁵

Past/Present Performance Evaluation

The evaluation of an offeror's past performance, including the agency's determination of the relevance and scope of an offeror's performance history, is a matter of agency discretion which we will not find improper unless it is inconsistent with the solicitation's evaluation criteria. *Zafer Taahhut Insaat Ve Tiaret AS*, B-420280, Jan. 19, 2022, 2022 CPD ¶ 157 at 7; *KIC Dev., LLC*, B-309869, Sept. 26, 2007, 2007 CPD ¶ 184 at 3. Our Office consistently recognizes that the evaluation of past performance is, by its nature, subjective. *DynCorp Int'l LLC; AAR Supply Chain, Inc.*, B-415873 et al., April 12, 2018, 2019 CPD ¶ 157 at 17; *JSW Maint., Inc.*, B-400581.5, Sept. 8, 2009, 2009 CPD ¶ 182 at 3. An offeror's disagreement with an agency's evaluation judgments, without more, does not demonstrate that those evaluation judgments were unreasonable. *Zafer Taahhut Insaat Ve Tiaret AS, supra*.

Unstated Evaluation Criteria

Centerline asserts that the agency applied unstated evaluation criteria under the past/present performance factor, which resulted in the agency assigning the protester's proposal an improper rating of "satisfactory confidence." Comments and Supp. Protest at 3.

⁵ Following review of the agency's and intervenor's requests for dismissal and responses, we dismissed Centerline's challenge to the agency's evaluation of the awardee's technical proposal. See GAO decision on dismissal requests, Sep. 11, 2025, Electronic Protest Docketing System No. 21. The protester alleged that the agency conducted a flawed evaluation of Vane's proposal under the technical capability factor because it did not consider the alleged serious deficiencies in the awardee's performance of prior similar contracts. Protest at 15. We dismissed this protest ground on the basis that Centerline failed to provide, at a minimum, credible allegations that were supported by evidence and were sufficient, if uncontradicted, to establish the likelihood of the protester's claim of improper agency action. *Warfighter Focused Logistics, Inc.*, B-423546, B-423546.2, Aug. 5, 2025, 2025 CPD ¶ 169 at 4.

In this regard, Centerline contended, without providing evidence, that Vane has a "limited fleet of qualifying vessels," and speculated on the identity of at least one vessel that Vane proposed under this requirement. Protest at 15. Moreover, the solicitation did not contemplate evaluation of prior performance under the technical capability factor. Instead, the agency would consider how offerors planned to meet solicitation requirements, the submission of certification requirements and certificates, the submission of charts and tables, and the submission of a quality control plan. See RFP at 45; AR, Tab 7, RFP attach. 7, Technical Capability Worksheet. Accordingly, we found that Centerline's unsubstantiated allegations failed to meet our pleading standards. *Warfighter Focused Logistics, Inc., supra*.

Under the past/present performance factor, the solicitation required offerors to provide at least two, but up to four past/present performance worksheets with past/present performance references, completed within the last three years of the solicitation issuance date, or currently ongoing. RFP at 42; AR, Tab 8, RFP attach. 5, Past/Present Performance Worksheet at 1. In addition, the RFP required offerors to complete PPQs. RFP at 42. Relevant here, section 1 of the PPQ, completed by the offeror, required offerors to identify the type of cargo moved under the past/present performance reference, *i.e.*, jet fuel, marine diesel, commercial fuel, or other fuel.⁶ See AR, Tab 9, RFP attach. 6, PPQ at 1; COS at 4.

The purpose of the past/present performance evaluation was to allow the agency to assess the offeror's ability to perform the efforts described in the solicitation based on the offeror's demonstrated past/present performance. RFP at 45. The agency would evaluate the past/present performance references on recency, relevancy, and quality of performance. *Id.* The agency would evaluate the relevance of past/present performance by considering the degree to which an offeror's past/present performance reference contract involved similar scope, magnitude, and complexities. *Id.* The agency assigned past/present performance references one of four relevancy ratings: (1) very relevant--past/present performance effort involved essentially the same scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this solicitation requires; (2) relevant--past/present performance effort involved similar scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this solicitation requires; (3) somewhat relevant--past/present performance effort involved some of the scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this solicitation requires; and (4) not relevant--past/present performance effort involved little or none of the scope and magnitude of effort and complexities this solicitation requires. *Id.* at 46.

The solicitation provided that the agency would consider an offeror's relevancy ratings, and the quality of the offeror's recent performance, to assess the degree of confidence the agency had in the offeror's ability to successfully perform if awarded the contract, resulting in the assignment of a performance confidence rating for each offeror. *Id.* The solicitation established five performance confidence ratings--substantial, satisfactory, neutral, limited, and no confidence. *Id.* at 46-47.

Centerline submitted four present/past performance references with its proposal. AR, Tab 26, Centerline Past/Present Performance Proposal. In the PPQ for each reference, Centerline checked the box indicating "other fuel" as the type of fuel transported. See *id.* at 4, 9, 14, 19.

⁶ In addition to describing the type of cargo moved (jet fuel, marine diesel, commercial fuel, or other fuel), the PPQ also required offerors to provide the type of equipment used, monthly gallons of fuel, monthly number of deliveries and monthly number of delivery locations, as well as locations of performance, and whether the offeror loaded, transported, discharged or lightered the fuel. RFP attach. 6, PPQ at 1.

The agency assigned Centerline a confidence rating of satisfactory with its four references assessed as relevant. AR, Tab 41, SSEB Report at 8; AR, Tab 39, Centerline Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 20. According to the SSEB, Centerline “achieved ratings ranging from ‘Some of the Solicitation Requirement’ to ‘Essentially the Same as the Solicitation Requirement’ in every subcategory under Relevancy.” AR, Tab 41, SSEB Report at 8. While the evaluators noted that Centerline’s experience transporting marine diesel fuel closely aligned with the contract requirement for F76 marine diesel fuel, the agency “could not justify a higher than ‘Satisfactory Confidence’ Assessment rating due to Centerline not providing any past/present performance references for transporting aviation fuel which, according to the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), accounts for 85 [percent] of the fuel moved under this requirement.” *Id.*

The agency assigned Vane a confidence performance rating of substantial with its two past/present performance references assessed as very relevant. AR, Tab 41, SSEB at 8; AR, Tab 40, Vane Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 10. The evaluators assigned “ratings ranging from ‘Similar to the Solicitation Requirement’ to ‘Essentially the Same as the Solicitation Requirement’ in every subcategory under Relevancy” and the agency noted that Vane, as the incumbent contractor, had “consistently met and/or exceeded the Government’s expectations for this service.” AR, Tab 41, SSEB Report at 8.

The protester contends that the agency applied unstated evaluation criteria in its focus on whether offerors’ past/present performance references demonstrated experience with transporting aviation fuel. In this regard, Centerline argues that the solicitation did not require offerors to provide past/present performance projects that demonstrated experience transporting “jet aviation fuel as compared to other types of fuel, such as marine diesel fuel.” Comments and Supp. Protest at 3. The protester explains that “the Agency did not advise offerors of the concerns that were subsequently documented in the record--that jet/aviation fuel would make up 85 [percent] of the work on the subject contract, and that the Agency wanted to see specific experience transporting jet/aviation fuel and cleaning those fuel tanks.” Supp. Comments at 6.

The agency argues that the transportation of specific fuel types is logically encompassed in the past/present performance evaluation, where the different fuel types to be moved under the contract were described in the PWS, and where offerors were required to identify which type of fuel they transported in the PPQs for their past/present performance references. Supp. COS at 3 (citing RFP attach. 6, PPQ at 1). The agency contends that Centerline did “in fact list the fuel types it had experience transporting” when it specifically listed the types of fuel used in maritime transportation for each of its past performance references. Supp. COS at 3. As a result, the agency argues that this demonstrates Centerline’s understanding that the agency would consider specific fuel types in its evaluation. *Id.* The agency explains that it properly determined Centerline’s PPQs as relevant for meeting the “at a minimum” fuel transportation standards instead of very relevant since the protester failed to demonstrate its qualifications in “handling

Jet-A, JP5, and F76,” which the solicitation identified as types of fuel that would be transported under the contract. See Supp. COS at 5-6.

It is axiomatic that in a negotiated procurement an agency must evaluate proposals based on the solicitation’s enumerated evaluation factors. *SupplyCore, Inc.*, B-411648.2, B-411648.3, Feb. 21, 2017, 2017 CPD ¶ 72 at 9. An agency may properly apply evaluation considerations that are not expressly identified in the RFP if those considerations are reasonably and logically encompassed within the stated evaluation criteria, so long as there is a clear nexus linking them. *Cantu Servs., Inc.*, B-421440, May 10, 2023, 2023 CPD ¶ 127 at 3; *Phoenix Air Grp., Inc.*, B-412796.2, B-412796.3, Sept. 26, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 308 at 11.

On this record, we find no basis to conclude that the agency applied unstated evaluation criteria by considering whether Centerline’s past/present performance projects demonstrated experience transporting aviation fuel. As noted above, the PWS states that “[t]his contract covers the transportation of Department of Defense-owned bulk jet fuel (JP5), marine diesel (F76), and commercial (Jet-A) by tug and barge[.]” PWS at 4. In addition, the PPQ form specifically required offerors to address the types of fuel it transported and included aviation fuel as an option. RFP attach. 6, PPQ at 1. Thus, the solicitation specifically identified the different types of fuel, including aviation fuel, to be transported under the contract. Given that the solicitation expressly identified the various types of fuels the contractor would have to transport, the agency reasonably considered the types of fuel transported when it evaluated and distinguished Centerline’s and Vane’s past/present performance.

While Centerline complains that the agency failed to advise offerors that “jet/aviation fuel would make up 85 [percent] of the work on the subject contract,” the solicitation made clear that aviation fuel was one type of fuel that would be transported under the contract. Accordingly, we conclude that considering whether an offeror’s past/present performance involved the transportation of certain fuel types listed in the solicitation is reasonably and logically encompassed within the past/present performance evaluation criteria. See Supp. Comments at 6; see AR, Tab 41, SSEB Report at 8; *Cantu Servs., Inc.*, *supra*. The protester’s objections to the agency’s evaluation here do not provide a basis to sustain the protest.

Disparate Treatment

Centerline alleges that the agency disparately evaluated proposals under the past/present performance factor. Comments and Supp. Protest at 11. Centerline argues that the agency found both of Vane’s past/present performance references as very relevant even though only one of its references had experience transporting aviation fuel. *Id.* Centerline contends that this represents disparate treatment because the agency found all four of its past/present performance references to be only relevant where they did not involve transportation of aviation fuel. The agency asserts that it properly considered Vane’s and Centerline’s past/present performance references based on its evaluation of the scope, magnitude of effort, and complexities for each

reference. Supp. COS at 12.

In conducting procurements, agencies may not engage in conduct that amounts to unfair or disparate treatment of competing offerors. *UltiSat, Inc.*, B-416809 *et al.*, Dec. 18, 2018, 2019 CPD ¶ 6 at 9. To prevail on an allegation of disparate treatment, a protester must show that the agency unreasonably downgraded its proposal for features that were substantively indistinguishable from, or nearly identical to, those contained in other proposal. *Cognosante MVH, LLC*, B-418986 *et al.*, Nov. 13, 2020, 2021 CPD ¶ 3 at 5. In this case, the protester's disparate treatment argument fails because the past/present performance references are not meaningfully the same in the way the protester contends.

Here, the solicitation explained that a past/present performance reference would be rated "very relevant" if it involved "essentially the same scope and magnitude of effort and complexities" required by the solicitation; "relevant" if it involved "similar scope and magnitude of effort and complexities"; and "somewhat relevant" if it involved "some of the scope and magnitude of effort and complexities." RFP at 46. The record shows that the agency evaluated relevance by considering the degree to which each past/present performance reference involved similar scope, magnitude, and complexities.

For the Vane reference that did not involve aviation fuel transportation, the agency found it to be essentially the same to the solicitation requirements for both magnitude of effort and complexities, but only similar for scope. AR, Tab 40, Vane Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 6-7. Because the agency found magnitude of effort and complexities as essentially the same as the solicitation requirements, the agency found the reference overall to be very relevant, despite the relevant rating for scope. *Id.* at 7, 10.

For Centerline's past/present performance references, the agency found the scope similar to the solicitation requirements on all four projects. However, the agency found that the magnitude of effort was similar for two of the references but only met some of the solicitation requirements on the other two references. AR, Tab 39, Centerline Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 19-20. For complexities, the agency found all four of Centerline's references to be essentially the same as the agency's requirements. *Id.* Given that Centerline's projects were found to be essentially the same as the solicitation requirements only for complexities, the agency determined overall that each reference was relevant. *Id.* at 17.

In sum, the agency rated Centerline's references as relevant where only one of the three elements were found to be essentially the same as the solicitation requirements. In contrast, for Vane's past/present performance reference that did not involve aviation fuel, the agency found two of the three elements to be essentially the same as the solicitation requirements that warranted an overall rating of very relevant. Thus, the record shows that the difference in the evaluation was a result of the different references submitted by each offeror. In other words, the lack of experience

transporting aviation fuel, and resultant rating of similar for scope, did not necessarily preclude the agency from finding the reference to be very relevant, where the other two elements were found to be essentially the same as the solicitation requirements. None of Centerline's past/present performance references were rated as essentially the same under both magnitude of effort and complexities and this accounts for the difference in the evaluation.

On this record, we find that Vane's superior rating stemmed from differences between the two proposals and does not represent disparate treatment. See *Cognosante MVH, LLC, B-418986 et al., supra*. This protest ground is denied.

"Too Close at Hand" Information

The protester alleges that the agency did not consider negative information regarding Vane's past performance that was "too close at hand" to be ignored. Protest at 12. Specifically, Centerline maintains that the agency ignored publicly available information, articles and reports that disclose a history of "material deficiencies" associated with Vane's vessels that resulted in stoppages and oil spills. Protest at 8-13; Comments and Supp. Protest at 20-25. For example, Centerline refers to United States (U.S.) Coast Guard Port State Information Exchange (PSIX) reports⁷ that disclose "performance problems--lack of fire suppression systems, dry docking, marine casualties--that directly impacted, and in several cases prevented, Vane from performing the incumbent contract." Comments and Supp. Protest at 20. The protester contends that this was information too close at hand for it not to have been considered and by failing to do so, the agency unreasonably assigned Vane a past/present performance rating of substantial confidence. Protest at 8.

The agency argues that it was not obligated to consider this information because the PSIX reports are "neither maintained nor close at hand" to the U.S. Transportation Command. COS at 15; Memorandum of Law (MOL) at 14. The agency also notes that, contrary to the protester's assertions, there was no requirement for the agency to consider "information maintained in the [U.S. Coast Guard] PSIX system" where the RFP "did not require offerors to provide [U.S. Coast Guard] inspection results on their fleets, much less vessels they did not propose for the contract." COS at 15. The agency also notes that it took this information into consideration when it was reflected in the past performance information the agency did review. The agency maintains that its evaluation of Vane's past/present performance was reasonable and consistent with the

⁷ The PSIX system contains vessel specific information derived from the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Information Safety and Law Enforcement System (MISLE). The information contained in PSIX represents a weekly snapshot of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) data on United States flag vessels, foreign vessels operating in United States waters, and Coast Guard contacts with those vessels. United States Coast Guard Port State Information Exchange, <https://cgmix.uscg.mil/PSIX/Default.aspx> (last visited January 2, 2026).

solicitation.

Our Office has explained that in certain limited circumstances, an agency has an obligation (as opposed to the discretion) to consider information bearing on its past performance of which the agency evaluators are personally aware (*i.e.*, information that is “too close at hand”), even if that information is not contained in an offeror’s proposal. This includes, in some instances, alleged negative past performance information concerning the awardee’s proposal. *See Northeast Military Sales, Inc.*, B-404153, Jan. 13, 2011, 2011 CPD ¶ 2 at 6-7. In the narrow instances where we have applied this principle, we have required the protester to demonstrate that the outside information bearing on the offeror’s proposal was not just known by the agency generally but, rather, was known to the specific agency employees involved in the source selection process. *Noblis MSD, LLC*, B-423599, B-423599.2, Sept. 11, 2025, 2025 CPD ¶ 214 at 9.

On this record, we find that the protester fails to demonstrate that the agency evaluators were aware or should have known the information at issue. As noted above, with the U.S. Coast Guard PSIX reports, the agency points out that the information in the PSIX reports is “neither maintained nor close at hand” to the United States Transportation Command. COS at 15. Furthermore, the protester has not demonstrated why the agency evaluators should have been aware of these individual incidents, particularly on vessels that were not proposed for performance under this contract.

The record reflects that the agency reasonably considered the offerors’ submitted PPQs and contractor performance assessment reporting system (CPARS) ratings for each reference to conduct the past/present performance evaluation. AR, Tab 40, Vane Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 1-3; AR, Tab 39, Centerline Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 1-3. Because Centerline has not demonstrated that the agency was aware (or should have been aware) of the PSIX information, and that the agency acted unreasonably in failing to consider it, we find no basis to conclude that the agency was obligated to consider this information during its past/present performance evaluation of Vane. *Noblis MSD, LLC, supra*. Accordingly, this allegation is denied.

Adequacy of Discussions

The agency established a competitive range and held discussions with Centerline and Vane. AR, Tab 41, SSEB Report at 4-9; COS at 7-8. As relevant here, the agency conducted four rounds of discussions with Centerline, to verify the recency of several of its past/present performance references and information related to delivery locations. Supp. COS at 23-24; AR, Tab 39, Centerline Past/Present Performance Evaluation at 13-18. The protester argues that its discussions were not meaningful because the agency failed to inform Centerline about its lack of relevant past/present performance examples demonstrating experience transporting aviation fuel. Supp. Comments at 17. Centerline argues that even if the agency did not find this to be a deficiency or significant weakness, it effectively treated it as such and was therefore required to inform Centerline of this during discussions. *Id.* The agency argues it was not required

to raise this with Centerline as it was not considered a significant weakness or deficiency. Supp. MOL at 33.

Agencies have broad discretion to determine the content and extent of discussions, and we limit our review of the agency's judgments in this area to a determination of whether they are reasonable. *Space Systems/Loral LLC*, B-413131, Aug. 22, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 242 at 10. When an agency engages in discussions with an offeror, the discussions must be meaningful, that is, discussions may not mislead offerors and must identify deficiencies and significant weaknesses in each offeror's proposal that could reasonably be addressed in a manner to materially enhance the offeror's potential for receiving award. *Lockheed Martin Corp.*, B-293679 *et al.*, May 27, 2004, 2004 CPD ¶ 115 at 7. There is no requirement, however, that discussions be all encompassing or extremely specific in describing the extent of the agency's concerns; agencies need only lead offerors into the areas of their proposals that require amplification. *Management Scis. for Health*, B-416041, B-416041.2, May 25, 2018, 2018 CPD ¶ 197 at 9; *Professional Performance Dev. Group, Inc.*, B-279561.2 *et al.*, July 6, 1998, 99-2 CPD ¶ 29 at 5.

Based on our review of the record we deny this protest ground. Nothing in the record indicates that the agency considered the protester's lack of past performance experience transporting aviation fuel to be a significant weakness or deficiency. Rather, the record reflects that the agency had satisfactory confidence in Centerline's past performance but that the lack of experience transporting aviation fuel was a distinguishing characteristic between the proposals. Because there is no indication this lack of experience was considered a significant weakness or deficiency, the agency was not required to raise this during discussions. Agencies are simply not required to advise the offeror of weaknesses that are not significant, even if those weaknesses later become the determinative factor in the award. *Management Scis. for Health, supra*. Accordingly, we reject the argument that the agency failed to conduct meaningful discussions.

Best-Value Determination

The protester challenges the agency's best-value tradeoff as unreasonable because the agency's underlying past/present performance evaluation is flawed. Protest at 16. The agency contends that the protester's challenge is derivative of the other challenges to the agency's evaluation and that the record demonstrates the Source Selection Authority reasonably identified why Vane's performance was the better value to the government at a 0.19 percent price premium. See MOL at 21-22. The protester's allegations concerning the best-value tradeoff decision are based on the protester's other challenges to the agency's evaluation, none of which have merit as set forth

above. See *Merrill Aviation & Def.*, B-416837, B-416837.2, Dec. 11, 2018, 2018 CPD ¶ 421 at 10. Therefore, this protest ground is also denied.

The protest is denied.

Edda Emmanuelli Perez
General Counsel