



DOCUMENT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

The decision issued on the date below was subject to a GAO Protective Order. This redacted version has been approved for public release.

Decision

Matter of: Coastal Management Solutions, Inc.

File: B-423344.3

Date: February 24, 2026

Anthony H. Anikeeff, Esq., Williams Mullen, PC, for the protester.
Richard B. Oliver, Esq., J. Matthew Carter, Esq., and Dinesh C. Dharmadasa, Esq., Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, for Strategic Data Systems, Inc., the intervenor.
Eric Lofquist, Esq., Department of the Navy, for the agency.
Michelle Litteken, Esq., and April Y. Shields, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

Protest challenging various aspects of the agency's evaluation and the best-value tradeoff decision is denied where the evaluation and award decision were reasonable and consistent with the stated evaluation criteria.

DECISION

Coastal Management Solutions, Inc. (Coastal), a small business of Virginia Beach, Virginia, protests the issuance of a task order to Strategic Data Systems, Inc. (SDS), a small business of Keller, Texas, by the Department of the Navy, Naval Supply Systems Command, under request for quotations (RFQ) No. N0018924R3088, to provide support services for the MyNavy Career Center (MNCC). The protester challenges various aspects of the Navy's evaluation of quotations and the best-value tradeoff decision.¹

We deny the protest.

BACKGROUND

The Navy is modernizing its MyNavyHR enterprise, which the agency uses for staffing the fleet and ensuring sailors are prepared for their positions. Agency Report (AR),

¹ Although the parties use the terms "quotations," "quotes," and "proposals" interchangeably throughout the record, the solicitation was labeled as an RFQ. Our decision refers to the submission and evaluation of quotations for consistency.

Exh. 24, Performance Work Statement (PWS) at 1.² The agency views the MNCC as a central component of the modernization effort. *Id.* at 2. The MNCC is “a shared-services organization that enables the consolidation of administrative and transactional processes from across MyNavyHR and the [career and life event] Hire-to-Retire process.” *Id.* The MNCC uses a tiered services model and includes a self-service portal, human resource service centers, and transactional service centers. *Id.* In this procurement, the Navy sought a contractor to provide tier one MNCC support, which the PWS described as “provid[ing] Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) as agent-assisted points of contact continuously available 24 hours a day to onboard initial entry members into the MyNavyHR environment, process pay and personnel transactions for members, and provide status updates, answer questions, and respond to member inquiries across all [career and life events].”³ *Id.*

On July 15, 2024, pursuant to the procedures of Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) part 16, the Navy issued the RFQ as a small business set-aside to holders of the Navy’s SeaPort Next Generation multiple-award, indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract.⁴ AR, Exh. 8, RFQ at 1; Contracting Officer’s Statement and Memorandum of Law (COS/MOL) at 4. The RFQ contemplated the issuance of a cost-plus-fixed-fee task order with a 1-year base period and four 1-year options. RFQ at 3, 9.

The RFQ provided for a two-step source selection process. AR, Exh. 7, RFQ amend. 2 at 3. In step one, vendors would submit a description of the firm’s approach to accomplishing four requirements. *Id.* The agency would evaluate the submissions, determine which firms were the most viable competitors, and notify the nonviable firms that they were eliminated from further consideration. *Id.* In step two, the firms deemed viable were invited to submit quotations. RFQ at 25; COS/MOL at 6.

Among the firms invited to submit quotations, award would be made to the responsible vendor with the quotation that represented the best value, considering the following factors, listed in descending order of importance: (1) performance approach; (2) past performance; and (3) cost/price. RFQ at 32. The non-cost/price factors were significantly more important than cost/price. *Id.*

² The page numbers referenced in this decision are the Adobe PDF page numbers in the documents submitted.

³ The instant requirement is a new requirement. AR, Exh. 5, RFQ Questions & Answers at 5. Previously, SDS and Coastal each supported different aspects of the requirement for the MNCC. SDS performed a contract supporting the human resource service centers, and Coastal supported transaction service centers. AR, Exh. 18, SDS Quotation at 13; AR, Exh. 14, Coastal Quotation at 16.

⁴ The agency issued two amendments to the RFQ; unless otherwise stated, when referring to the RFQ we cite to the final version of the RFQ, submitted as exhibit 8 to the agency report.

Relevant here, for the performance approach factor, the RFQ instructed vendors to “address specifically how they propose to meet” five technical requirements of the PWS, such as “implementing a managed workload distribution methodology to the available workforce utilizing tools to properly forecast, schedule, and staff a 24 hour/day human resource focused transactional customer service center.” RFQ at 28. The RFQ stated quotations “must provide details concerning what the contractor will do and how it will be done. This includes a full explanation of the techniques, disciplines, and procedures to successfully accomplish the requirements of the solicitation.” *Id.* Aside from stating that quotations would be evaluated in accordance with the RFQ’s instructions, and a quotation needed to be assigned a rating of not less than acceptable to be eligible for award, the RFQ did not provide any evaluation criteria for the performance approach factor. *See id.* at 32-34.

For the past performance factor, vendors could submit no more than three past performance references, and the RFQ provided that the agency would evaluate a vendor’s past performance references individually and in the aggregate. RFQ at 32. The RFQ defined relevant past performance as, among other things, “the same as, or similar to, the scope and magnitude of work described by this solicitation.” *Id.* at 28. Additionally, the RFQ stated that if a vendor submitted a reference for a contract performed by a proposed subcontractor, the reference “will be given weight proportional to the scope and magnitude of the aspects of the work under the solicitation for which the subcontractor is proposed.” *Id.* at 32.

The agency received step one submissions from 11 interested firms, including Coastal and SDS, prior to the July 23, 2024, deadline. COS/MOL at 5. The Navy invited the five firms determined to be viable competitors to submit quotations for step two, and the agency received four quotations prior to the September 17 closing date, including quotations submitted by Coastal and SDS. *Id.* The source selection evaluation team (SSET) evaluated the non-cost/price quotations and found the quotations submitted by Coastal and SDS were the only quotations rated as acceptable under the performance approach factor and eligible for award. *Id.* at 10. After evaluating the vendors’ cost/price quotations and performing a best-value tradeoff analysis, the Navy issued the task order to SDS on February 13, 2025. *Id.*

Thereafter, on March 3, Coastal filed a protest with our Office, B-423344.2, alleging that the agency steered the procurement to SDS and failed to address an appearance of impropriety involving SDS’s relationship with two agency employees. Coastal also challenged various aspects of the RFQ, the evaluation of the vendors’ quotations, and the best-value tradeoff decision. Subsequently, on March 25, the agency notified our Office that it was electing to take corrective action by reviewing the protest allegations and taking appropriate actions, as necessary. AR, Exh. 11, Notice of Corrective Action. The agency stated that the corrective action may include reevaluating quotations and issuing a new source selection decision. *Id.* Based on the agency’s proposed corrective action, we dismissed the protest as academic. *Coastal Mgmt. Sols., Inc.*, B-423344.2, Mar. 26, 2025 (unpublished decision).

During the voluntary corrective action, the Navy investigated Coastal's allegations regarding improper steering and an appearance of impropriety and concluded the protester's claims were based on innuendo and suspicion--and not credible evidence. COS/MOL at 12; AR, Exh. 12, Determination & Findings at 15. The Navy then reevaluated the vendors' quotations as follows:

	Coastal	SDS
Performance Approach	Outstanding	Outstanding
Past Performance	Satisfactory Confidence	Substantial Confidence
Overall	Good	Outstanding
Proposed Cost/Price⁵	\$235,715,294	\$250,335,586

AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 8, 13; COS/MOL at 13, 28.

The SSET evaluated the vendors' quotations under the performance approach factor, identified four strengths in Coastal's quotation and six strengths in SDS's quotation, and rated each quotation as outstanding. AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 2-5, 9-11. The SSET then evaluated the vendors' quotations under the past performance factor, assessing the scope of the past performance references based on the similarity of the reference to the PWS's five primary tasks,⁶ and assessing magnitude using the number of full-time equivalent employees performing the work. *Id.* at 5. The SSET found that Coastal demonstrated experience similar to the PWS tasks, and it assigned Coastal's quotation a rating of satisfactory confidence. *Id.* at 8. The SSET found that SDS demonstrated experience essentially the same in scope as the PWS tasks, and it assigned SDS's quotation a rating of substantial confidence. *Id.* at 13. The SSET assigned Coastal's quotation an overall rating of good, and SDS's quotation an overall rating of outstanding. *Id.* at 8, 13.

The contracting officer, who was the source selection authority, reviewed the strengths assessed in each quotation and compared the advantages that each vendor offered in meeting the PWS requirements. AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 28-32. For example, the contracting officer compared the vendors' approaches to implementing a managed workload distribution methodology and found the quotations were "technically

⁵ Although the Navy made probable cost adjustments to the vendors' proposed costs, the agency treated Coastal's proposed costs as realistic for the purposes of the tradeoff analysis in order to view Coastal's quotation "in its most favorable light," and therefore made the tradeoff based on a price difference of 8.4 percent between Coastal's proposed cost of \$235,715,294 and SDS's most probable cost of \$255,603,152. AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 22, 31. The protester has not challenged this calculation or the agency's cost realism analysis and, as such, our decision does not further address the most probable cost of performance for each quotation.

⁶ The five primary tasks were: management and administrative support; customer service; personnel transaction processing support; pay transaction processing support; and technical support. PWS at 6, 10, 11, 13, and 15.

equivalent” because each vendor’s approach was “expected to provide a similar benefit to the Government.” *Id.* at 30. As an additional example, the contracting officer compared the vendors’ approaches to knowledge management and noted that SDS’s approach included “incorporating a tracking process to track updates and reviews throughout the entire knowledge management process” and “incorporating Quick Start Guides”--which the Navy found were “unique benefits” and “effective discriminators.” *Id.* at 31. After reviewing the SSET’s findings for the performance approach factor, the contracting officer wrote: “Overall, SDS’s approach offers additional, more-varied benefits to the Government, unmitigated by aspects of [Coastal’s] approach, and SDS therefore holds a slight technical superiority over [Coastal] in the Performance Approach factor despite both quoters receiving ratings of Outstanding.” *Id.* at 31.

The contracting officer then compared the evaluation findings under the past performance factor, noting that each vendor demonstrated relevant past performance in the aggregate and received high performance quality ratings. AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 31. The contracting officer considered the SSET’s findings with respect to the scope and magnitude of the vendors’ past performance references and found that SDS’s experience with “essentially the same as all PWS functional areas” gave SDS an advantage, which “[Coastal’s] relatively smaller advantage in magnitude” could not offset.” *Id.*

The contracting officer found that SDS’s quotation was superior to Coastal’s quotation under the performance approach and past performance factors, which were significantly more important than cost/price. *Id.* at 31-32. The contracting officer determined that the benefits associated with SDS’s performance approach, combined with the agency’s greater confidence in SDS’s ability to successfully perform the requirements, “outweigh[ed] the relatively modest 8.4 [percent] price premium.” *Id.* at 32. The Navy selected SDS’s quotation as offering the best value, and the agency issued the task order to SDS on September 30. COS/MOL at 33.

After the conclusion of the debriefing process, Coastal filed this protest.⁷

DISCUSSION

Coastal challenges various aspects of the Navy’s evaluation of the vendors’ quotations and the best-value tradeoff decision. While our decision here does not specifically

⁷ The task order has a value in excess of \$35 million and, therefore, is within our jurisdiction to hear protests related to the issuance of task orders under multiple-award IDIQ contracts that were awarded under the authority of title 10 of the United States code. 10 U.S.C. § 3406(f)(1)(B).

discuss every argument, or variation of the arguments, we have considered all of the protester's assertions and find none furnishes a basis for sustaining the protest.⁸

Performance Approach Evaluation

Coastal broadly challenges the Navy's evaluation of the vendors' quotations under the performance approach factor, primarily arguing that the agency unreasonably and disparately evaluated quotations.⁹ Protest at 48-49; Comments at 40. The Navy

⁸ For example, Coastal alleges the procurement was tainted by an appearance of impropriety because of SDS's relationship with two Navy personnel, and that the Navy steered the task order to SDS. Protest at 41-44. The Navy responded to the allegations in the agency report, and in its comments, Coastal wrote: "Although [Coastal] no longer is asserting [the Navy employees] create the appearance of impropriety, there remains the potential that the manner in which this procurement has been handled retains a taint of impropriety." Comments at 50 n.12. Because the protester withdrew its appearance of impropriety allegation concerning SDS's purported relationship with certain agency personnel, we need not address it further.

In addition, we reject the protester's allegation that "a taint of impropriety remains" because the agency supposedly steered the task order to SDS. We have consistently explained that government officials are presumed to act in good faith, and a contention that procurement officials are motivated by bias or bad faith must be supported by convincing proof; our Office will not attribute unfair or prejudicial motives to procurement officials based upon mere inference, supposition, or unsupported speculation. *Undercover Training, LLC*, B-418170, Jan. 9, 2020, at 6 n.4. The burden of establishing bad faith is a heavy one; the protester must present facts reasonably indicating, beyond mere inference and suspicion, that the actions complained of were motivated by a specific and malicious intent to harm the protester. *Lawson Envtl. Servs., LLC*, B-416892, B-416892.2, Jan. 8, 2019, at 5 n.5. Coastal has not met that burden. Beyond Coastal's unsupported allegations that the Navy acted improperly in favor of SDS, the protester has presented no evidence of bias or bad faith. Accordingly, we need not further address this allegation.

⁹ As a corollary argument, Coastal complains that the RFQ lacked objective evaluation criteria for the performance approach factor, and the protester asserts that this resulted in a subjective evaluation that allowed the Navy to favor SDS. Protest at 45-48; Comments at 40. The Navy argues, and we agree, that Coastal's argument constitutes an untimely challenge to the terms of the RFQ. COS/MOL at 51. Our Bid Protest Regulations contain strict rules for the timely submission of protests. 4 C.F.R. § 21.2. The timeliness rules reflect the dual requirements of giving parties a fair opportunity to present their cases and resolving protests expeditiously without disrupting or delaying the procurement process. *Verizon Wireless*, B-406854, B-406854.2, Sept. 17, 2012, at 4. Under these rules, protests based upon alleged improprieties in a solicitation, which are apparent prior to the time set for receipt of quotations, must be filed prior to that time. 4 C.F.R. § 21.2(a)(1). Here, Coastal did not protest the lack of objective

(continued...)

responds that it reasonably evaluated quotations in accordance with the RFQ. COS/MOL at 52. We address two representative examples of Coastal's allegations below.

We note 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. *URS Fed. Servs., Inc.*, B-413333, Oct. 11, 2016, at 6. Agency evaluators have considerable discretion in making subjective judgments about the technical merit of quotations. See *Enterprise Servs., LLC*, B-414513.2 *et al.*, July 6, 2017, at 7. In reviewing protests of an agency's evaluation, we do not reevaluate quotations; rather, we review 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. *Sapient Gov't Servs., Inc.*, B-412163.2, Jan. 4, 2016, at 4. A protester's disagreement, without more, does not form the basis for us to conclude that an evaluation was unreasonable. *STG, Inc.*, B-405101.3 *et al.*, Jan. 12, 2012, at 7.

In addition, to prevail on an allegation of disparate treatment, a protester must show that the agency unreasonably failed to credit its quotation for aspects that were substantively indistinguishable from, or nearly identical to, those contained in other quotations. See *CAE USA, Inc.*, B-421550 *et al.*, June 22, 2023, at 9; *Battelle Mem'l Inst.*, B-418047.3, B-418047.4, May 18, 2020, at 5 (*citing Office Design Grp. v. United States*, 951 F.3d 1366, 1372 (Fed. Cir. 2020)).

Managing Workload

We first address the protester's allegation that the Navy misevaluated the vendors' approaches to implementing a managed workload distribution methodology. As noted above, the contracting officer found the vendors' approaches to accomplishing this task were of equal merit. AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 30. The protester complains that the agency failed to acknowledge that Coastal has "experience in running and scheduling the [transactional service center] sites," and it contends "the Navy erred in grading [Coastal] and SDS equally" for this requirement given the protester's superior experience. Comments at 40.

Given the terms of the solicitation, the protester has not provided a basis to find the agency's evaluation unreasonable. As noted above, the RFQ instructed vendors to "provide details concerning what the contractor will do and how it will be done." RFQ at 28. Coastal has not identified any relevant language in its quotation concerning how Coastal would implement a managed workload distribution methodology that the Navy allegedly overlooked. See Comments at 40. Instead, the protester asserts the agency should have evaluated Coastal's quotation more favorably because of its experience with transactional service centers. Nothing in the RFQ, however, required the agency to

evaluation criteria for the performance approach factor prior to the closing time for submission of quotations, and we dismiss this protest ground as untimely.

consider a vendor's experience when evaluating performance approach. In this respect, the protester's allegations are not supported by the terms of the solicitation, which required vendors to provide details concerning their proposed approaches. While the protester may disagree with the agency's conclusions regarding the merits of Coastal's quotation, such disagreement does not provide a basis to conclude the evaluation was unreasonable.¹⁰ *STG, Inc., supra*.

Knowledge Management

We next address Coastal's allegation of disparate treatment in the evaluation of the vendors' approaches to maintaining an up-to-date knowledge management repository. As noted above, the SSET identified a strength in SDS's quotation for its approach to knowledge management, and the contracting officer considered this approach to be beneficial. AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 31. In this context, the protester argues that its quotation also warranted the same strength, and the agency's failure to recognize the merit in the protester's quotation constitutes disparate treatment. Comments at 31.

Here, in assessing the strength in SDS's quotation, the SSET noted that SDS proposed to use information technology systems to track knowledge articles throughout the entire approval process, and SDS proposed to use input from [DELETED] to determine and verify updates. AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 10. The Navy found SDS's approach was "expected to exceed specified performance or capability requirements." *Id.*

Coastal contends its quotation also warranted a strength because "SDS's tracking system does not offer anything to warrant it being considered better[.]" Comments at 41. In advancing this argument, the protester points to language from its quotation stating: "Our [Quality Assurance/Knowledge Management] Manager, Curriculum Design and [Standard Operating Procedures] Manager, and Training Delivery Manager [DELETED]." *Id.* (quoting AR, Exh. 14, Coastal Quotation at 10). The protester also notes that it proposed to "engage[] with MNCC stakeholders to [DELETED]." *Id.* The term "MNCC stakeholders" is not defined in Coastal's quotation.

On this record, we find no basis to sustain the protest. We will not find that an agency has disparately evaluated quotations where the differences in the evaluation are based on differences in the vendors technical approaches. *Johnson Controls Sec. Sols.*, B-418489.3, B-418489.4, Sept. 15, 2020, at 8. Here, the protester has not shown that

¹⁰ Insofar as Coastal argues it should have been given extra credit, or been evaluated as the most capable vendor, because of its experience providing transactional service center services under a predecessor contract, we have repeatedly found that there is no requirement that an incumbent be given extra credit due to its incumbency, or that an agency assign or reserve the highest rating for an incumbent. See, e.g., *Assessment & Training Sols. Consulting Corp.*, B-421575.3, B-421575.4, July 16, 2024, at 12; *CACI, Inc.--Fed.*, B-420729.2, Mar. 1, 2023, at 9 n.8; *National Gov't Servs., Inc.*, B-412142, Dec. 30, 2015, at 15.

the vendors' quotations included substantively indistinguishable approaches to knowledge management. The SSET assessed a strength in SDS's quotation because SDS proposed to track knowledge articles throughout the entire process, and SDS would use input from [DELETED] to determine and validate updates. AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 10. The protester has not shown that its quotation included substantively indistinguishable features. For example, Coastal has not pointed to any language in its quotation stating Coastal would track knowledge articles throughout the entire process. Furthermore, we are not persuaded that Coastal's plan to gather feedback from "MNCC stakeholders" is substantively indistinguishable from SDS's approach because it is unclear whose feedback Coastal will use or whether the feedback will be used for the same purpose as SDS proposed to use the input referenced in its quotation.

In sum, Coastal has not made the requisite showing that the agency treated the two quotations unequally and fails to establish that the difference in the agency's assessments did not reflect differences between the quotations. Accordingly, we deny this allegation.

Past Performance Evaluation

Coastal challenges the Navy's past performance evaluation, asserting that when the agency evaluated the scope of the vendors' past performance references, the SSET "improperly downgraded the [Coastal] team's experience" and "elevated SDS's experience." Comments at 42. The Navy responds that the SSET evaluated the vendors' past performance reasonably and in accordance with the RFQ. COS/MOL at 56-57, 67.

An agency's evaluation of past performance, which includes its consideration of the relevance, scope, and significance of an offeror's performance history, is a matter of discretion which we will not disturb unless the agency's assessment is unreasonable or inconsistent with the solicitation criteria. *PricewaterhouseCoopers Pub. Sector, LLP*, B-415504, B-405504.2, Jan. 18, 2018, at 10-11. The evaluation of past performance, by its very nature, is subjective, and we will not substitute our judgment for reasonably based evaluation findings. *Janus Glob. Operations, LLC*, B-418980 *et al.*, Nov. 10, 2020, at 14. A protester's disagreement with the agency's judgment, without more, is insufficient to establish that an evaluation was improper. *Id.*

As noted above, when the SSET evaluated past performance, the evaluators assessed the scope of the vendors' past performance references based on their similarity to the PWS's five primary tasks (management and administrative support; customer service; personnel transaction processing support; pay transaction processing support; and technical support). AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 5; see PWS at 6, 10, 11, 13, and 15. Coastal submitted three past performance references. For example, the SSET considered one of the protester's past performance references, a contract to provide call center services for the Navy's civilian employee assistance program that was performed by Coastal's proposed subcontractor. *Id.* at 6. The SSET found that the

effort was somewhat similar in scope to the RFQ, and similar to the work that the subcontractor was proposed to perform. *Id.* at 7. Specifically, the project demonstrated experience similar to two of the PWS tasks (management and administrative support and customer service) and somewhat similar to one other PWS task (technical support). *Id.* The SSET rated the reference as relevant. *Id.*

The SSET also analyzed the other two past performance references that Coastal submitted, and the SSET found that in the aggregate, the references demonstrated experience that was essentially the same as two of the PWS tasks, similar to two other tasks, and somewhat similar to the fifth PWS task. AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 7. The SSET concluded: “In the aggregate, [Coastal’s] Past Performance demonstrates similar scope and essentially the same magnitude of effort the solicitation requires and is therefore determined to be Relevant.” *Id.*

Coastal contends that the agency’s evaluation was unreasonable, and it asserts that its references demonstrated experience that was essentially the same scope as all five PWS tasks and therefore should have been rated as very relevant. Comments at 45. For example, the protester points to the agency’s evaluation of the past performance reference for the contract supporting the Navy’s civilian employee assistance program discussed above and asserts that the “experience falls squarely” into two of the PWS tasks. *Id.* at 44. The protester argues that if its references had been rated appropriately, its quotation would have been assigned a rating of substantial confidence--instead of satisfactory confidence. *Id.* at 45.

Based on our review, we find nothing unreasonable regarding the agency’s evaluation of the relevance of Coastal’s past performance references, including the contract supporting the Navy’s civilian employee assistance program that was performed by Coastal’s proposed subcontractor. In its quotation, Coastal wrote that under this contract, licensed clinicians provided clinical call center support for civilian employees, including performing intake, conducting initial assessments, establishing eligibility for services, and providing referrals. AR, Exh. 14, Coastal Quotation at 18. It was not unreasonable for the SSET to conclude that this reference was similar to the instant PWS with respect to two of the PWS’s primary tasks (providing management and administrative support and customer service), and somewhat similar with respect to providing technical support. In this regard, while both efforts involve providing customer support, the instant PWS requires the contractor to provide CSRs to onboard members, process pay and personnel transactions, and respond to inquiries across all career life events. When compared to the past performance reference, the type of support and the audience for the support differed. On this record, the protester has not demonstrated that the evaluation was unreasonable, and we find no basis to sustain the protest. *PricewaterhouseCoopers Pub. Sector, supra.*

We next address Coastal’s protest of the agency’s evaluation of SDS’s past performance. By way of background, SDS submitted two past performance references, one of which was SDS’s contract supporting the MNCC human resource service centers. AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 11-12. In SDS’s quotation, SDS addressed how

the past performance reference was relevant to the instant PWS. AR, Exh. 18, SDS Quotation at 13-15. For example, for the personnel transaction processing support task, SDS discussed how its analytics team monitored personnel transactions, assigned CSRs to tasks, and utilized agency systems to process transactions. *Id.* at 15. Similarly, with respect to pay transaction processing support, SDS's quotation stated that the firm provided pay transaction processing support, and it noted that its agents were trained in basic pay, personnel, and travel voucher functions. *Id.* The SSET evaluated the reference, and with respect to the scope wrote: "This reference demonstrates experience providing Tier 1 Navy pay and personnel transactions and contact center support. This effort for processing Tier 1 pay and personnel transactions, fielding questions, and addressing issues for MyNavyHR customers 24 hours a day demonstrates experience essentially the same as [the primary PWS tasks]." AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 11-12.

The protester contends that it was unreasonable for the SSET to conclude that this reference involved essentially the same scope as the RFQ because, according to Coastal, SDS did not perform the type of transactional service center work that the RFQ requires and therefore could not demonstrate experience with personnel transaction processing support or pay transaction processing support. Comments at 46. Coastal complains that SDS's quotation, therefore, did not warrant a rating of substantial confidence. *Id.* The Navy responds that the SSET's evaluation of SDS's past performance was reasonable, in accordance with the evaluation criteria, and consistent with applicable statutes and regulations. COS/MOL at 67.

On this record, we have no basis to question the reasonableness of the Navy's evaluation of SDS's past performance, including the assessment of scope. The record shows that the SSET considered SDS's past performance reference and found that it demonstrated experience with all of the PWS primary tasks--including personnel transaction processing support and pay transaction processing support. AR, Exh. 13, SSET Report at 11-12. While Coastal characterizes SDS's role in performing transaction processing support as limited, the protester has not shown that the Navy's judgments were unreasonable. The agency considered the information in SDS's quotation and reasonably concluded that the past performance reference "involved essentially the same scope of effort" as the PWS because the reference involved "processing Tier 1 pay and personnel transactions, fielding questions, and addressing issues for MyNavyHR customers 24 hours a day." *Id.* As noted above, the evaluation of past performance is subjective, and we will not substitute our judgment for reasonably based evaluation findings. *Janus Glob. Operations, supra.* Accordingly, we deny Coastal's challenge to the Navy's evaluation of SDS's past performance.

In sum, we have reviewed the record and, although the protester disagrees with the agency's past performance evaluation, Coastal has not demonstrated that the Navy's assessments were unreasonable. Accordingly, we deny the protester's allegations.

Best-Value Tradeoff Decision

Coastal challenges the best-value tradeoff decision, arguing the Navy's evaluation of the vendors' quotations was flawed and, but for the evaluation errors, the protester's quotation would have been rated as highly as SDS's, with a lower cost/price, and would have been selected for award. Comments at 48-49. For example, the protester primarily challenges the Navy's conclusion that the advantages SDS's quotation offered with respect to training and knowledge management outweighed the benefits Coastal's quotation offered in processing transactions and monitoring customer satisfaction. Comments at 41-42. The protester asserts that a "proper analysis of the proposals should have found them to be both equally Outstanding." *Id.* at 42. The agency responds that it performed a thorough and reasonable best-value tradeoff analysis. COS/MOL at 70.

Where, as here, a solicitation provides for the issuance of a task order on a best-value tradeoff basis, it is the function of the source selection authority to perform a price/technical tradeoff, that is, to determine whether one quotation's technical superiority is worth its higher price. *RiverTech, LLC*, B-420246, Dec. 21, 2021, at 5. Source selection officials in negotiated procurements have broad discretion in determining the manner and extent to which they will make use of technical and price evaluation results, and they must use their own judgment in deciding what the underlying differences between proposals might mean to successful performance of the task order. *Tiber Creek Consulting, Inc.*, B-422925, B-422925.2, Dec. 18, 2024, at 9; *VSE Corp.*, B-421942 *et al.*, Dec. 13, 2023, at 12. Price/technical trade-offs may be made, and the extent to which one may be sacrificed for the other is governed only by the tests of rationality and consistency with the evaluation criteria. *Tiber Creek Consulting, Inc.*, *supra*.

Further, in a task order competition conducted under FAR section 16.505, the agency's rationale for any tradeoffs made and the benefits associated with the additional price must be adequately documented. FAR 16.505(b)(1)(iv)(D), (b)(7)(i); *c.f.*, *Engility Corp.*, B-413120.3 *et al.*, Feb. 14, 2017, at 24. There is no need for extensive documentation of every consideration factored into a tradeoff decision. FAR 16.505(b)(7); *Engility Corp.*, *supra*. 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. *Ironclad Tech. Servs., LLC*, B-419976.2, May 2, 2022, at 4.

Here, as noted above, the contracting officer compared the strengths identified in each vendor's quotation and concluded that SDS's quotation was slightly superior for performance approach and superior under the past performance factor. AR, Exh. 23, Business Clearance Mem. at 31. In considering whether SDS's quotation warranted a higher cost, the contracting officer wrote: "SDS's superior workforce management and knowledge management capabilities, as indicated by its assessed strengths, will result in more efficient and responsive service, therefore improving program efficiency and sailor satisfaction." *Id.* at 32. The contracting officer continued: "Given the critical

importance of this requirement, which requires service delivery that impacts every Navy service member and their families, such advantages are of significant value to the Government.” *Id.* The contracting officer concluded that the benefits associated with SDS’s quotation “outweigh the relatively modest 8.4 [percent] price premium.” *Id.*

On this record, we find unobjectionable the agency’s best-value tradeoff decision. While the protester takes issue with Navy’s determination regarding the importance of the strengths identified in each quotation, the protester’s disagreement with the agency’s judgments about the relative merit of competing quotations, without more, does not establish that the agency departed from the solicitation or that the agency’s judgments were unreasonable. *Battelle Mem’l Inst., supra* at 5.

In sum, notwithstanding the protester’s views, the record shows the contracting officer acknowledged and documented the advantages of each quotation and explained why the advantages that SDS’s quotation offered were worth a higher cost. In these circumstances, the selection of SDS’s quotation was reasonable.

The protest is denied.

Edda Emmanuelli Perez
General Counsel