U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

**441 G St. N.W.**
**Washington, DC 20548**

**Comptroller General**
**of the United States**

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# Decision

**Matter of:** OST, Inc.

**File:** B-415343; B-415343.2

**Date:** December 18, 2017

Thomas A. Coulter, Esq., and Nicole Hardin Brakstad, Esq., LeClair Ryan, for the protester.
Daniel R. Forman, Esq., James G. Peyster, Esq., and Hart W. Wood, Esq., Crowell & Moring LLP, for Attain, LLC, the intervenor.
Timothy B. O'Keefe, Esq., John L. Bowles, Esq., and Nancy Toppetta, Esq., Department of Energy, for the agency.
K. Nicole Willems, Esq., and Jennifer D. Westfall-McGrail, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

## DIGEST

1. Protest challenging the evaluation of protester's proposal is denied where the record reflects that the evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the terms of the solicitation.

2. Agency's best-value tradeoff determination is unobjectionable where the record reflects an adequately-documented source selection decision that justified award to a higher-rated, higher-priced offeror.

## DECISION

OST, Inc., of Washington, D.C., protests the issuance of a task order to Attain, LLC, of McLean, VA, under request for proposals (RFP) No. DE-SOL-0010408, issued by the Department of Energy (DOE), National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL), for information technology support services (ITSS).[1] OST challenges the evaluation of its proposal and the best-value determination.

[1] According to OST, the current RFP is a follow-on to a contract awarded to Alliant Enterprise JV, of which OST was a member and the designated task order management lead. Protest at 6.

We deny the protest.

BACKGROUND

The RFP was issued on March 17, 2017, to National Institutes of Health Information Technology Acquisition and Assessment Center (NITAAC) Chief Information Officer-Solutions and Partners 3 (CIO-SP3) government-wide acquisition contract (GWAC) holders, and sought proposals for information technology (IT) operations and maintenance functions support for the NETL.[2] Contracting Officer's Statement of Fact/ Memorandum of Law (COSF/MOL) at 3-4. The RFP contemplated the issuance of a task order with fixed-price and cost-plus-fixed-fee contract line items, for a 3-year base period and two 1-year options. RFP at 1. The task order would be issued to the offeror whose proposal represented the best value to the government, considering technical and cost/price factors. RFP at 177. The technical factor included the following subfactors, referred to in the RFP as criteria: (1) technical approach, (2) management/organizational approach, (3) transition approach plan, (4) key personnel, and (5) past performance and relevant experience.[3] Id. at 178-181.

As relevant here, the RFP provided that proposals would be evaluated under the technical approach criterion to determine the extent to which the proposed technical approach provided "a means for site support services to be executed and for those infrastructure and administrative activities that sustain these efforts." RFP at 178. The RFP also provided that technical capability would be evaluated by assessing the likelihood that the proposed technical approach would meet the agency's requirements, including any associated risk of non-performance in providing technical services. Id. According to the RFP, the emphasis of the technical approach criterion would be the offeror's ability to demonstrate a grasp of the overall effort and the applicability of their proposed approach/solutions. Id. The RFP also advised that the evaluation of the proposed technical approach would be based on certain attributes--for example, comprehensive coverage, appropriateness, and reliability--as they relate to the performance work statement (PWS). Id.

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[2] The competition was limited to contract holders who were responsible small businesses. RFP at 1.

[3] The RFP provided that the technical criteria were more important than cost/price. RFP at 178. Additionally, the RFP established that the technical approach criterion was the most important technical criterion followed by the management/organizational approach and transition approach plan criteria, which were of equal importance to one another. Id. The technical approach criterion was of equal importance to the combined management/organizational approach and transition approach plan criteria. Id. The key personnel criterion and the past performance and relevant experience criterion were of equal importance, and, when combined, were of equal importance to the management/organization approach and transition approach plan criteria. Id.

Under the management/organizational approach criterion, the RFP provided that an offeror's proposed organizational structure and approach would be evaluated based on potential effectiveness and efficiency with regard to the successful management and execution of the PWS requirements. Id. at 179. Among other things, evaluators would consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of an offeror's proposed staffing plan. Id. In this regard, offerors were required to provide staffing plans that, among other things, depicted their staffing by activity, and included an organizational chart showing different labor categories and their locations within the organization. Id. at 159. Offerors were also required to provide a narrative staffing plan summary that included an explanation as to how the staffing plan "aligns with the [o]fferor's technical approach to performing this requirement; labor category position titles; NETL site location where each position will be located; proposed labor hours; company affiliation; lines of authorities; and level of commitment (e.g., full-time; part-time; number of hours per year) to the contract." Id.

With regard to the transition approach plan criterion, the RFP provided that proposals would be evaluated on the extent to which the proposed transition approach provided an efficient and realistic means for "transitioning the effort from the existing contract through the assumption of full contract responsibility including the continuing of operations during the transitions." RFP at 179. Evaluators would also consider an offeror's approach to addressing knowledge transfer to federal personnel as anticipated in the migration of work throughout contract performance years 2 through 5. Id. Among other things, offerors were required to provide a strategy for staffing, relocating, orienting, and training both key and non-key personnel, and for avoiding disruption of service during the transition. Id. at 159.

The RFP established that, under the key personnel criterion, evaluators would consider the extent to which the proposed key personnel demonstrated the ability to satisfy the requirements of the RFP. Id. at 180. Under this criterion, offerors were required to submit letters of commitment for key personnel. Id. at 161. Offerors were advised that, among other things, the letters of commitment had to demonstrate that the key personnel were committed to the contract for a minimum of twelve months. Id. Additionally, the RFP advised that the agency would evaluate the levels of commitment as demonstrated in the commitment letters to determine whether they met or exceeded the minimum requirements. Id. at 180.

The agency received six proposals by the closing date, including proposals submitted by OST and Attain. COSF/MOL at 4. The final evaluation of the protester's and awardee's proposals was as follows:

| | Attain | OST |
|---|---|---|
| **Technical Criteria** | | |
| Technical Approach | Outstanding | Good |
| Management/Organizational Approach | Outstanding | Satisfactory |
| Transition Approach Plan | Good | Good |
| Key Personnel | Outstanding | Good |
| Past Performance and Relevant Experience | Good | Outstanding |
| **Total Evaluated Price** | $36,936,645 | $35,627,753 |

Agency Report (AR), Tab B.2, Source Selection Decision Document (SSDD) at 6.[4]

The SEB assigned seven weaknesses and nine strengths to OST's proposal under the technical approach criterion. Id. at 9-10. Under the management/organizational approach criterion, the SEB assigned three strengths, one weakness, and one significant weakness to OST's proposal. Id. at 15. The SEB assigned five strengths and one weakness to OST's proposal under the transition approach plan criterion. Id. at 19. Under the key personnel criterion, the SEB assigned three strengths and two weaknesses to OST's proposal, and under the past performance and relevant experience criterion, OST's proposal was assigned two strengths and one significant strength. Id. at 22, 24.

In the source selection decision, the source selection official (SSO) noted that OST's proposed price was lower than Attain's, but concluded that Attain's proposal was technically superior such that the "price differential to take advantage of [Attain's] technical superiority [was] not disproportionate to the anticipated benefits associated with those advantages."[5] Id. at 29. The SSO also noted the potential for cost savings due to the fact that Attain proposed the lowest fixed fee for the cost-reimbursement portions of the work. Id. Having concluded that Attain offered the best overall value, the agency issued a task order to Attain on September 13. COSF/MOL at 9. On the same day, the agency notified OST that it had selected Attain. Id. OST received a debriefing on September 19, and this protest followed on September 25. [6]

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[4] Possible adjectival ratings for the first four technical criteria ranged from outstanding to unsatisfactory. AR, Tab B.1, Source Evaluation Board (SEB) Report, at 18-19. Possible adjectival ratings for the past performance and relevant experience criterion ranged from outstanding to unacceptable. Id. at 19-20. Offerors' total evaluated prices consisted of their prices for the fixed-price contract line item numbers (CLINs), as well as their most probable cost for the cost-plus-fixed-fee CLINs. Id. at 125.

[5] For example, the SSO noted that Attain had the highest rating in the heaviest weighted criterion--technical approach. AR, Tab B.2, SSDD at 28.

[6] Because the value of the task order is in excess of $10 million, our Office has jurisdiction to consider this protest. 41 U.S.C. § 4106(f).

## DISCUSSION

OST challenges the agency's assignment of weaknesses to its proposal under the technical factor criteria. OST also argues that the agency should have assigned additional strengths to its proposal for features that exceeded the RFP requirements. Additionally, OST argues that the agency failed to perform and/or document an adequate price/technical tradeoff analysis and best-value award decision. As explained below, we find the protester's arguments to be without merit.[7]

### Technical Evaluation

OST challenges 10 of the 11 weaknesses assigned to its proposal under the technical criteria. In response, the agency contends that the assignment of the weaknesses was reasonable and consistent with the RFP.

The evaluation of technical proposals in a task order competition is a matter within the discretion of the contracting agency, since the agency is responsible for defining its needs and the best method for accommodating them. Cherokee Nation Tech. Solutions, LLC, B-411140, May 22, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 170 at 5. In reviewing an agency's evaluation, we will not reevaluate technical proposals, but instead will examine the agency's evaluation to ensure that it was reasonable and consistent with the solicitation's stated evaluation criteria and with procurement statutes and regulations. Id. A protester's disagreement with an agency's judgment is not sufficient to establish that an agency acted unreasonably. Id. Based on our review of the record here, we find no basis to conclude that the weaknesses assigned by the SEB were unreasonable. We discuss several representative examples below.

As a first example, the SEB assigned a weakness to OST's proposal under the technical approach criterion based on OST's proposal to create an online [DELETED] site with access controls for each ITSS group. AR, Tab B.1, SEB Report, at 50. In this regard, OST proposed to limit permissions so that only some groups could access certain information, and subsets of individuals within each group would have different access rights. Comments at 3. The evaluators explained the basis for the finding of weakness as follows:

> The Offeror proposes to restrict [DELETED] site collections for each group. This approach seems to lead to stove-piping. The Offeror's proposal indicates that OST plans to create a structured ITSS [DELETED] online site collection with appropriate access controls and standardized structural hierarchy. The online site collection will host IT documents,

[7] While we do not address every argument raised by the protester in this decision, we have considered all of the arguments and conclude that none provides a basis for sustaining the protest.

> drawings, project documentation, problem resolutions, and all other content deemed pertinent to ITSS operations. Each group within ITSS will have their own subsite with strictly enforced access controls. A select subset of personnel from each group will be given contribute permissions. A select subset of personnel from each group will be given read-only permissions…. This approach limits the Offeror's ability to share information and to view the IT program as a whole instead of limiting information to specific areas. This approach increases the potential for unsuccessful contract performance.

AR. Tab B.1, SEB Report, at 50.

OST argues that the weakness amounts to a requirement that all personnel have access to all [DELETED] content, which the protester contends was not required by the solicitation. Comments at 3. We think the protester's interpretation overstates the evaluators' finding. While the rationale behind the weakness highlights problems with OST's approach to limiting access to information in the [DELETED] system, the weakness was not, contrary to the protester's argument, based on an unstated requirement that all of OST's personnel have access to all of the content in the system. That is, while the SEB found OST's approach too restrictive, the SEB's rationale for the weakness does not indicate that the agency would have negatively viewed all approaches that included restrictions on access for any personnel.

Additionally, the protester contends that it was unreasonable for the agency to assign a weakness to its approach because certain clauses in the solicitation require prevention of data access by unauthorized users. As an example in support of its argument, the protester cites to a section of the PWS dealing with service operations support, which includes a requirement for the contractor to provide access management to both the physical components and the digital environment in order to prevent unauthorized access. RFP at 96.

In response, the agency recognizes the requirement for the proposed contractor to limit access from unauthorized users. COSF/MOL at 14. The agency notes, however, that OST's approach would place limitations on access to information from subgroups within the IT infrastructure, regardless of whether they are considered authorized or unauthorized users for access to a particular environment. Id. The agency's explanation in this regard is consistent with the weakness assigned by the SEB, which does not suggest that OST should not provide any limits on access, but rather finds fault with the particular approach proposed by the protester. The protester is essentially disagreeing with the agency's judgment as to the merits of its approach to barring access by unauthorized users. As noted above, a protester's disagreement with an agency's judgment is not sufficient to establish that an agency acted unreasonably. Cherokee Nation Tech. Solutions, LLC, supra. Here, the record provides no basis to conclude that the weakness assigned by the SEB was unreasonable.

By way of a second example, the SEB assigned the following weakness to OST's proposal under the transition approach plan criterion:

> The Offeror asserts "we will not need to negotiate salary, benefits, etc." and the Offeror's model considers current salary information…. This does not take into consideration the high volume of IT positions in the area competing for the same pool of IT service providers, nor the level of effort required in this solicitation which is different from the prior contract and requires a higher volume of effort and expertise. Failing to negotiate salaries may result in employees seeking positions at other organizations or not obtaining the qualified workers necessary to meet the proposed technical approach proposed. The SEB is concerned with this approach and its ability to ensure that qualified employees are provided in a manner to encourage stability on the contract and to avoid turnover. This increases the likelihood of unsuccessful transition and contract performance.

AR, Tab B.1, SEB Report, at 90-91.

The protester contends that the SEB applied unstated evaluation criteria by requiring OST to "pay more money for OST's employees to perform their same jobs," while overlooking other aspects of OST's proposal that supported "employee morale in both monetary and nonmonetary ways, like providing autonomy to employees and keeping employees invested in the company and its goals."[8] Protest at 27. In response, the agency argues that the protester's approach was based on the assumption that everyone can be retained at current salaries and benefits. As the SEB noted (and as acknowledged in OST's proposal), the current market conditions for this type of work are considered highly competitive. AR, Tab C.2, OST's Proposal at 85; COSF/MOL at 29. Thus, the agency maintains that the SEB's concerns about OST's ability to retain employees and avoid turnover was reasonable. We agree with the agency, and view the protester's argument as nothing more than disagreement.[9]

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[8] The protester also contends that it actually deserved a strength based on its proposed use of current salary information as a model because OST "already had knowledge of the salaries of all staff on the incumbent contract." Comments at 16. The protester's contention in this regard represents nothing more than disagreement with the agency, and in no way demonstrates that the evaluation was unreasonable.

[9] In its response to the protest, the agency noted that OST had lost approximately 26 of its 80 employees on the current contract to a new opportunity nearby. This included the loss of the proposed program manager, who left right before announcement of the award. COSF/MOL at 29, n.18. OST argues that the agency's consideration of its current retention issues amounted to application of an improper unstated evaluation criterion. Supplemental Comments at 4. Despite the agency's reference to this information in its report, there is no indication in the underlying contemporaneous record that the SEB considered OST's issues with retention on the current contract as part of

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The SEB also based the weakness on the failure of OST's approach to account for the fact that the current solicitation requires a different level of effort and a higher volume of effort and expertise than the prior contract. AR, Tab B.1, SEB Report, at 90-91. This led to concerns that OST's decision not to negotiate salaries might result in employees seeking positions at other organizations, such that OST might not be able to acquire qualified workers needed to carry out its technical approach. Id. According to the agency, it was reasonable for the SEB to assess a weakness on this basis due to OST's failure to consider the competitive job market and the changes in the requirements from the previous contract. COSF/MOL at 29.

In its response, OST does little to dispel the agency's concerns that it has not properly considered changes in requirements. In fact, OST disagrees with the agency as to the extent to which the requirements are different, arguing that the core functions are the same as under the incumbent contract, such that the SEB's concerns are misplaced. Comments at 17. OST does not argue, however, that there are no differences in the requirements, and it provides no explanation that would cast the weakness assigned by the SEB in an unreasonable light. Here, the record provides no basis for us to find the weakness assigned by the SEB unreasonable.

A third weakness challenged by OST was assigned under the key personnel criterion. The SEB reviewed the letters of commitment for key personnel provided by OST and determined that they did not demonstrate a willingness to commit for a minimum of twelve months, as required by the solicitation.[10] AR, Tab B.1, SEB Report, at 107. In this regard, the SEB noted that the proposal stated that the key personnel would be committed for the required period, but that such commitment was not included in the actual commitment letters. Id.

The letters contained the following generic statement tailored to the role of the signatory:

> Please consider this my statement of commitment to support the DOE NETL ITSS [p]rogam in the [k]ey [p]ersonnel [p]osition of [program manager or chief engineer]. I agree and look forward to providing my experiences and skills in the successful implementation and ongoing execution of the NETL ITSS program upon award. It is understood and confirmed that I will perform all services as the ITSS [program manager or

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its evaluation. The record thus fails to support the protester's argument that the agency relied upon an unstated evaluation criterion in evaluating OST's proposal.

[10] As noted above, the solicitation advised offerors that the letters of commitment had to demonstrate that the key personnel were committed to the contract for a minimum of 12 months. RFP at 161.

chief engineer] in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Morgantown, West Virginia, and Albany, Oregon.

AR, Tab C.2., OST's Technical Proposal, at 108, 117.

OST argues that its letters should be construed as indicating that the key personnel were committed for the entire length of the contract. According to OST, since the full contract term exceeds the minimum 12-month requirement set forth in the solicitation, this should have been viewed as a strength. Comments at 17. The agency argues, however, that because OST submitted letters of commitment that failed to specifically address the length of the commitment, as required by the RFP, the assignment of the weakness was reasonable. We agree with the agency.

Here, the RFP was clear as to the level of commitment required in the commitment letters, and offerors were specifically advised that the agency would be evaluating the letters with regard to whether the required level of commitment had been demonstrated. Thus, the protester had the responsibility to clearly address the solicitation requirement in its proposal, but failed to do so. Offerors are responsible for submitting well-written proposals with adequately-detailed information that clearly demonstrates compliance with the solicitation requirements and allows for a meaningful review by the procuring agency. Government Telecomms., Inc., B-299542.2, June 21, 2007, 2007 CPD ¶ 136 at 5. Here, the protester failed to provide adequate information demonstrating that its key personnel had the required minimum level of commitment, and we have no basis to find the agency's assignment of a weakness unreasonable.

The protester also challenges the significant weakness assigned to its proposal under the management/organizational approach criterion, which was based on issues pertaining to its staffing. In this regard, the SEB concluded that OST proposed an insufficient skill mix to perform the work required, and unduly relied on non-technical staff, including project managers, leads, and other administrative-type functions. AR, Tab B.1, SEB Report, at 73. Additionally, the SEB found that OST's staffing levels were misaligned, because they did not include the proper number of staff in the appropriate areas. Id.

OST contends that the significant weakness is the result of the agency's failure to properly read different sections of its proposal in concert. Comments at 13-14. According to the protester, had the evaluators conducted a proper review of its proposal, they would have concluded that OST's staffing mix was appropriate for the scope of the work. Protest at 24. We are not persuaded by the protester's argument.

OST's proposal included a chart, referred to as Exhibit 5, which displayed roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority for each CLIN, and included the labor categories proposed. AR, Tab C.2, OST's Technical Proposal at 12. A number in parentheses was included beside each labor category. For example, under both CLINs 2 and 4, the proposal listed application programmer--level II (1). Id. There was no explanation as to what the parenthetical numbers were meant to represent, however. Id. In addition to the chart at Exhibit 5, OST's proposal included a staffing plan, which listed the labor categories proposed for each CLIN, with the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) proposed for each position. Id. at 26-33. In multiple instances, the number of FTEs associated with a particular CLIN in the staffing plan was inconsistent with the parenthetical numbers in Exhibit 5. OST contends that the agency wrongly assumed that the numbers in exhibit 5 were meant to represent the number of FTEs proposed for each listed category. Comments at 15. Instead, according to OST, the parenthetical numbers were merely intended to represent the number of bodies. Id.

We disagree with the protester that the agency's reading of its proposal was unreasonable. To the extent the significant weakness resulted from a misunderstanding regarding the relationship between Exhibit 5 and OST's staffing plan, the blame for the misunderstanding rests squarely on OST. As noted above, offerors are responsible for submitting well-written proposals with adequately-detailed information that allows for a meaningful review by the procuring agency. Government Telecomms., Inc., supra, at 5. Here, because OST provided no explanation as to the meaning of the parenthetical numbers assigned to each labor category listed in Exhibit 5, the evaluators were left to reach their own conclusions as to what the numbers represented. To the extent they understood the numbers to represent FTEs, the protester has pointed to nothing in its proposal that should have disabused them of that notion. Based on the record, we have no basis to conclude that the assignment of this significant weakness was unreasonable.

In addition to challenging the evaluators' findings of weakness, OST argued in its initial protest that its technical proposal contained 37 features that should have been recognized as strengths.[11] Protest at 31. In response, DOE argues that 34 of the features listed by the protester were considered by the agency, but were not discussed in the evaluation documents because they neither merited a strength nor a weakness. As we have previously explained, an agency is not required to document all "determinations of adequacy" or explain why a proposal did not receive a strength, weakness, or deficiency for a particular item. Allied Tech. Group, Inc., B-412434, B-412434.2, Feb. 10, 2016, 2016 CPD ¶ 74 at 13. Here, we have no basis to question the reasonableness of the agency's decision not to assign strengths to the protester's proposal based on features highlighted by OST in its protest.

With regard to the three remaining proposal features that OST contends should have merited strengths, the agency noted that two of the three features had been assigned related strengths. COSF/MOL at 34-35. The protester provided no response to the agency's arguments regarding those features in its comments, and we thus consider the protester's complaints pertaining to those features to be abandoned. See Computer

[11] We note in this connection that the protester did not clearly identify the solicitation requirements related to the proposal features in question, nor did it provide explanations for how these features exceeded the RFP's requirements. Protest at 35.

Sci. Corp., B-409386.2, B-409386.3, 2015 CPD ¶ 34 at 4, n. 5. The remaining feature cited in OST's protest related to OST's plan for transition. Specifically, the protester argued that it should have received a strength because it could implement a proper transition in 24 hours. Protest at 35. The agency noted, however, that while OST stated that it could complete a transition in 24 hours, it actually proposed a 45-day transition. Id. at 35. Because the protester did not propose a 24-hour transition, we find no basis to conclude that the agency's evaluation was unreasonable.

In sum, we find no basis to conclude that the agency should have assigned fewer weaknesses or additional strengths to the protester's proposal. The protester's arguments can best be described as nothing more than disagreement with the agency's judgment, which, as discussed above, is not sufficient to establish that DOE acted unreasonably.

Best-Value Determination

OST asserts that the best value determination was improper because the SSO failed to conduct and document a comparative analysis of proposals, and did not sufficiently document the determination that Attain's higher-rated, higher-priced proposal represented a better value to the government than OST's lower-rated, lower-priced proposal.[12] Comments at 19. In response, the agency argues that its best-value tradeoff analysis was reasonable, thorough, and adequately documented. Supp. COSF/MOL at 6.

Source selection officials in negotiated procurements have broad discretion in determining the manner and extent to which they will make use of the technical and price evaluation results; price/technical tradeoffs may be made, and the extent to which one may be sacrificed for the other is governed only by the test of rationality and consistency with the solicitation's evaluation criteria. Cherokee Nation Tech. Solutions, LLC, supra, at 8. Where, as here, the RFP provides for a best-value tradeoff decision, the source selection official retains discretion to select a higher-priced but technically higher-rated submission, if doing so is in the best interest and is consistent with the solicitation's stated evaluation and source selection scheme. Oasis Systems, LLC, B-407273.54, et al., June 19, 2014, 2014 CPD ¶ 199 at 16.

Here, the SSO conducted an independent review of the proposals as well as the findings in the SEB report. AR, Tab B.2, SSDD at 3. Additionally, the SSO received a detailed briefing from the contracting officer and the SEB chairperson, and consulted with members of the SEB and DOE staff supporting the acquisition. Id. In the SSDD, the SSO documented a comparison of proposals under each of the solicitation criteria,

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[12] OST also argues that the best-value decision is flawed because it was based on an unreasonable evaluation. As discussed above, we have no basis to find that the evaluation here was unreasonable. The protester's arguments in that regard are thus without merit.

as well as an overall comparative assessment of technical proposals. Id. at 13, 17, 20, 23, 26, and 27.

The SSO's best-value analysis generally referenced the conclusions documented under each criterion, including discriminators identified by the SSO. Id. at 28. In this regard, the SSO concluded that:

> [i]n reviewing the substance of the strengths and weaknesses of the six [o]fferors, and in consideration of the risk identified with a superior technical approach that is supported by a slightly higher price, I find that the significant discriminators in technical approaches more than outweigh the price variance. The SEB identified, and I agreed, that Attain had numerous significant strengths in the [c]riterion of higher importance. No other [o]fferor received a similar amount of significant strengths. The nature of these strong attributes support the technical superiority of the Attain proposal. The price differential to take advantage of this technical superiority is not disproportionate to the anticipated benefits associated with those advantages.

Id. at 28-29.[13] Ultimately, the SSO concluded that Attain's proposal was most advantageous and provided the best value. Id. at 29. Here, the record shows a detailed consideration of the differences between proposals, which supported the SSO's determination that Attain's proposal represented the best value of the government. Based on this record, we have no basis to conclude that the best-value decision was unreasonable.

The protest is denied.

Thomas H. Armstrong
General Counsel

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[13] The SSO also noted that OST's lower proposed price was related to OST's transition approach which shifted the cost of the transition to the current contract. AR, Tab B.2, SSDD at 29.