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# Decision

**Matter of:** Network Runners, Inc.

**File:** B-418268; B-418268.2

**Date:** February 14, 2020

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## DIGEST

1. Protest challenging deficiencies evaluated in the protester's proposal is denied because the agency's evaluation was reasonable and in accordance with the solicitation.
  2. Protest alleging that the agency inconsistently evaluated the protester's proposal under the organizational experience and past performance factors is denied because the agency's evaluation was reasonable and in accordance with the solicitation.
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## DECISION

Network Runners, Inc., a woman-owned small business of Sterling, Virginia, protests the agency's evaluation of its proposal under request for proposals (RFP) No. N6001-18-R-0005, issued by the Department of the Navy, Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific, for informational technology (IT) services. The protester argues that: (1) the agency unreasonably evaluated its proposal as deficient for failing to demonstrate organizational experience in required key areas; (2) the agency deviated from the solicitation's stated evaluation criteria; and (3) the agency inconsistently evaluated its proposal under the organizational experience and past performance factors.

We deny the protest.

## BACKGROUND

On May 3, 2018, utilizing the procedures of Federal Acquisition Regulation part 15, the agency issued the RFP, as a total small business set-aside, seeking IT services to support the physical and logical infrastructure of the agency's Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation (RDT&E) network. Agency Report (AR), Tab 5, RFP, at 1, 7, 93. The RDT&E computer and communications network supports a scientific user community, located at more than 130 research and development labs, which utilizes the network "to develop, test, and certify new systems." Id. at 7. Included in this network is the Secret RDT&E network, "which provides local secure connectivity." Id. The solicited IT services in support of the RDT&E and Secret RDT&E networks include, among other things: video teleconferencing; telephone infrastructure support; information resources management; network operations center support; server system administration and engineering; Microsoft system center configuration management administration and engineering; network security; cybersecurity; network infrastructure support; and cloud administration and engineering. Id.

The solicitation contemplates award of multiple indefinite-delivery indefinite-quantity contracts with a 2-year base period and three 1-year option periods, under which both cost-plus-fixed-fee level of effort and cost-plus-fixed-fee completion task orders may be issued. RFP at 3-4, 38-39, 79, 93. The solicitation established that award would be made on a best-value tradeoff basis taking into consideration three factors, listed in descending order of importance: (1) organizational experience; (2) past performance; and (3) cost. Id. at 93. The solicitation provided that the two non-cost factors combined were significantly more important than cost. Id.

The solicitation established a three-step evaluation process. RFP at 93. Step one had two parts; first, the agency would evaluate each offer on a pass or fail basis for "acceptability"--e.g., whether the offeror took exceptions to or imposed conditions on the terms and conditions of the RFP. Id. at 94. Next, the agency would evaluate each offeror's organizational experience and past performance. Id. at 94-95. Offerors receiving a marginal or lower rating for organizational experience would be eliminated from the competition after this step, and would not be further evaluated. Id. at 95. For step two, the agency would analyze proposed costs for balance, reasonableness, and realism. Id. at 96. For step three, the agency could perform an optional cost-technical tradeoff. Id. The solicitation provided that in lieu of performing a cost-technical tradeoff, the agency may make "award to all offerors still under consideration for award" if, based on the evaluation, it concluded that each offeror would be a viable competitor at the task-order level, proposed a reasonable and realistic price, and that the offerors' professional employee compensation plans did not raise "significant concerns regarding the offerors' abilities to maintain program continuity, uninterrupted high-quality work, and availability of required competent professional service employees." Id. at 97.

With respect to the evaluation of organizational experience, the solicitation provided that organizational experience is "the opportunity to learn by doing." RFP at 94. In evaluating an offeror's organizational experience, the solicitation established the agency

would “consider the breadth, depth and relevance of offeror work performed on Government contracts since 1 January 2013” in the following five statement of work (SOW) key areas: (1) network security; (2) cybersecurity; (3) network infrastructure support; (4) network operations center; and (5) server system administration and engineering. Id. at 9-11, 94. The solicitation further provided that the agency’s assessment of relevance may include consideration of “similarity to work contemplated under the RFP with respect to complexity, length of performance, number of tasks, scope, type of work, and value.” Id. at 94.

With respect to the evaluation of past performance, the solicitation provided that the agency would assess “the offeror’s probability of meeting the solicitation requirements,” and “the offeror’s demonstrated recent and relevant record of performance in supplying products and services that meet the contract’s requirements.” RFP at 95. The solicitation established a three-step approach to evaluating past performance. Id. The agency would first consider recency--i.e., work performed since January 1, 2013. Id. Second, the agency would evaluate recent work for relevancy, which the solicitation defined in the same manner as under the organizational experience evaluation factor. Id. Third, the agency would evaluate the overall quality of an offeror’s recent work that had been found at least somewhat relevant, focusing on offerors’ past adherence to contract schedules, cost control effectiveness, contract management, small business utilization, and regulatory compliance. Id. at 95-96

The solicitation required offerors to submit an organizational experience matrix and a written capabilities narrative for up to three contract references, at least one of which was for the prime offeror. RFP at 88-90. The solicitation provided that the same references would be used for both the organizational experience and past performance evaluations. Id. at 89. The solicitation instructed offerors to use the organizational experience matrix to explain the “breadth, depth, and relevance” of their experience on government contracts in the five above-listed SOW key areas.

The agency received 36 proposals before the solicitation closed on June 7, 2018. AR, Tab 6, Business Clearance Memorandum,<sup>1</sup> at 4. One of the 36 proposals failed the initial offer acceptability review, and was not evaluated further. Id. at 13. The agency evaluated 24 of the 36 proposals, including the protester’s, as either marginal or unacceptable under the organizational experience factor, and eliminated them from further consideration for award after step one of the evaluation. Id. The agency evaluated the remaining 11 proposals as acceptable or outstanding under the organizational experience factor and assigned them each a rating of satisfactory confidence under the past performance factor. Id. All 11 of the acceptable or better proposals advanced to step two of the evaluation, and the agency evaluated each as

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<sup>1</sup> The Business Clearance Memorandum serves as the agency’s source selection decision, and will hereinafter be referred to as the SSD.

proposing balanced, reasonable, and realistic costs.<sup>2</sup> Id. at 96, 98-99. Following the cost analysis, the agency selected all 11 remaining proposals for award. Id. On October 28, 2019, the agency sent offerors a pre-award notice identifying the 11 apparent awardees. AR, Tab 1, Pre-Award Notification. Following receipt of this notice, the protester requested and received a pre-award debriefing, after which it filed its protest with our Office.

## DISCUSSION

The protester challenges the evaluation of its proposal, including the assessment of three deficiencies. The protester argues that the agency ignored information in its proposal, and deviated from the solicitation's stated evaluation criteria by evaluating each of its references individually, rather than collectively. Further, the protester contends that the agency inconsistently evaluated its proposal under the organizational experience and past performance factors, both of which used the same definition of relevancy.<sup>3</sup> For the reasons that follow, we find no basis to sustain the protest.

### Organizational Experience Deficiencies in Protester's Proposal

Under the organizational experience factor, the agency evaluated the protester's proposal as deficient in three of the five SOW key areas--network infrastructure support, network operations center, and server system administration and engineering. AR, Tab 8, Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) Report, at 141-142; Tab 6, SSD, at 64-65. The agency evaluated the protester's proposal as having significant weaknesses in the two remaining SOW key areas--network security and cybersecurity. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report at 140-141; Tab 6, SSD, at 63-64. The agency concluded that the protester would not be "competitive for work in the [multiple-award contract] environment and would not likely be able to perform the work due to its material failures in organizational experience," that the protester's references "collectively do not meet the requirements of the solicitation," and that the "[r]isk of unsuccessful contract performance is unacceptable." AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 142; Tab 6, SSD, at 65. The agency assigned the protester's proposal an unacceptable rating under the organizational experience factor. Id.

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<sup>2</sup> The 11 acceptable or better offerors proposed costs ranging from \$77,301,572 to \$96,036,994. AR, Tab 6, SSD, at 13. The total evaluated costs calculated by the agency for the 11 offerors ranged from \$84,699,503 to \$98,274,242. Id. The protester proposed costs of \$93,160,079, which were not evaluated. Id.

<sup>3</sup> The protester purports to challenge its exclusion from the competitive range. See e.g., Protest at 1. The record reflects, however, that the agency did not establish a competitive range, and intends to make award on the basis of initial proposals. See AR, Tab 6, SSD, at 212. Moreover, the resolution of this protest turns not on whether the protester's elimination from consideration for award resulted from the establishment of a competitive range, but on the reasonableness of the agency's evaluation of deficiencies in the protester's proposal.

The protester challenges the agency's assessment of each deficiency and significant weakness in its proposal, arguing that the agency unreasonably ignored information in its proposal. Protest at 15-25. The protester contends that rather than looking at whether it had faced similar kinds of challenges, as established in the solicitation, the agency "focused exclusively on whether the offeror had previously performed work that precisely matched" the solicitation requirements. Id. at 10.

In reviewing a protest challenging an agency's evaluation, our Office will not reevaluate proposals, nor substitute our judgment for that of the agency, as the evaluation of proposals is a matter within the agency's discretion. Interactive Info. Solutions, Inc., B-415126.2 et al., Mar. 22, 2018, 2018 CPD ¶ 115 at 7. Rather, we will review the record only to determine whether the agency's evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the stated evaluation criteria and with applicable procurement statutes and regulations. Id. A protester's disagreement with the agency's judgment, without more, does not establish that the evaluation was unreasonable. Consolidated Eng'g Servs., Inc., B-311313, June 10, 2008, 2008 CPD ¶ 146 at 6.

Here, we have reviewed the record and have no basis to question the agency's evaluation. While our decision does not specifically address every argument raised by the protester, we have considered all of them and find that none provides a basis to sustain the protest. As a representative sample, we address below two of the three deficiencies assessed in the protester's proposal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As a general matter, the protester argues that the agency's explanations of its evaluation findings should be ignored as post hoc rationalizations that are not supported by the contemporaneous record. Comments at 15. In reviewing an agency's evaluation, we do not limit our consideration to contemporaneously-documented evidence, but instead consider all the information provided, including the parties' arguments and explanations. Remington Arms Co., Inc., B-297374, B-297374.2, Jan. 12, 2006, 2006 CPD ¶ 32 at 10. While we accord greater weight to contemporaneous source selection materials as opposed to judgments made in response to protest contentions, post-protest explanations that provide a detailed rationale for contemporaneous conclusions, and simply fill in previously unrecorded details, will generally be considered in our review of the rationality of a selection decision, so long as those explanations are credible and consistent with the contemporaneous record. Serco, Inc., B-406683, B-406683.2, Aug. 3, 2012, 2012 CPD ¶ 216 at 7; NWT, Inc.; PharmChem Labs., Inc., B-280988, B-280988.2, Dec. 17, 1998, 98-2 CPD ¶ 158 at 16. Based on the entire record before us, we conclude that the explanations provided by the agency in its report are consistent with the contemporaneous evaluation documents, and provide previously unrecorded details elucidating the conclusions of the evaluators and source selection authority contained in those contemporaneous documents.

## Network Operations Center SOW Key Area Deficiency

For the network operations center SOW key area, the solicitation requires the awardee(s) to provide operations center support by “managing all RDT&E IT incident, service and change request tickets to resolution utilizing an IT [infrastructure library] aligned methodology,” including incident and service tickets related to network account, operating system, application, and network configuration requests. RFP at 10. The awardee(s) will be required to ensure that all requests are documented, assigned, and resolved, escalated, or closed within documented “Ticket Target Resolution Times.” Id. The awardee(s) also will be required to “assist the Government in defining and creating incident, service, and change request processes for delivered IT services.” Id. at 11. Further, the awardee(s) will be responsible for opening and closing operations center facilities at the Secret level, and monitoring protected distribution systems during working hours. Id.

The protester identified three reference contracts as part of its proposal--two for itself and one for a proposed subcontractor. AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 4-15. The record reflects that the agency evaluated each of the protester’s three references as demonstrating little to no organizational experience relevant to the network operations center SOW key area. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 141; Tab 6, SSD, at 64. For example, the evaluators concluded that the protester’s first reference, which involved transitioning systems for the Navy’s Enterprise Data Center, failed to demonstrate relevant organizational experience, to include incident ticket management. Id. The protester argues that its data center transitioning experience is relevant because it involved “using a ticketing system to manage incidents and change process requests.” Protest at 22. The protester’s proposal notes that it “use[d] the [DELETED] ticketing system to request data center resources” and that each step of its system transition work was “assigned, updated, and escalated via the ticketing process.” AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 7. The agency explains, however, that the protester’s experience was not relevant because the protester’s proposal indicates that the protester was a user of the IT incident ticketing system, not managing the system as required by the solicitation. Contracting Officer’s Statement (COS) and Memorandum of Law (MOL) at 31; AR, Tab 9, SSEB Chair Decl., at 7.

The protester maintains that the agency’s explanation ignores the section of its proposal describing its management of the Remedy ticketing system. Comments at 15. We disagree. The protester’s narrative explanation of its work under its first reference contract explains that it “use[s]” the Remedy ticketing system, and addresses how the work it performed was assigned and reported through the ticketing system. AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 7. Nowhere in its description of its work does the protester reference or explain that it was responsible for the management of the [DELETED] ticketing system.

Similarly, the evaluators concluded that the protester’s second and third references demonstrated little to no experience in the area of incident ticket management area. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 141; Tab 6, SSD, at 64. Specifically, the evaluators found

that the protester's second reference demonstrated no incident ticket response work related to "organizational support in network accounts, operating system, application, and network configuration requests," and that the incident ticket management work under its third reference was related "to web application support only." Id. The protester argues that its work under its second reference contract included relevant incident ticket response work, pointing to its proposal's description of providing "[DELETED] technical support and coordinat[ing] with vendors ([DELETED]) as necessary to recreate, triage, mitigate and resolve incidents and problems across all [customer] production environments." Protest at 23; AR, Tab 10, Protester's Proposal, at 10. Further, the protester argues that its third reference demonstrated relevant experience in which its proposed subcontractor "established a [DELETED] ticketing system that documents and manages tickets using [DELETED]." Protest at 23; AR, Tab 10, Protester's Proposal, at 15.

The agency explains that the protester's work under its second reference addressed the provision of [DELETED] technical support, and not the management of the incident ticket system. COS-MOL at 32; AR, Tab 9, SSEB Chair Decl., at 8. In addition, the agency notes that while the protester's second reference included some incident management support, it did not mention working on incident tickets related to network accounts, operating systems, or application requests, all of which are included within the solicitation's description of work required under the network operations center SOW key area. Id. Accordingly, the evaluators concluded that the protester's second reference demonstrated only limited experience. Id.; AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 141; Tab 6, SSD, at 64. Regarding the protester's third reference, the agency explains that the incident ticket response system work was performed in the limited context of a specific program, and did not address the management of "an entire network's IT incident, service, and change requests," as required by the solicitation. COS-MOL at 33; AR, Tab 9, SSEB Chair Decl., at 8. Based on the record before us, we have no basis to question the agency's evaluation.

In addition to finding that the protester's references demonstrated little to no organizational experience in managing an incident ticket response system, the evaluators concluded that the protester's references demonstrated little to no organizational experience relevant to opening and closing operations at Secret level facilities and monitoring protected distribution systems during working hours. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 141; Tab 6, SSD, at 64. Specifically, the evaluators found that only the protester's third reference included any relevant experience, and that it was limited because it did not include monitoring protected distribution systems during working hours. Id. The protester argues that the agency's evaluation was unreasonable because its third reference demonstrated "experience with the kinds of challenges it will face supporting the [agency's] Secret facility" because its proposed subcontractor had open/close privileges at a Defense Information Systems Agency Top Secret facility. Comments at 16; AR, Tab 10, Protester's Proposal, at 15. This argument is misplaced, however, because the agency did not conclude that the protester lacked organizational experience with opening and closing a Secret facility; it found that the protester's third reference failed to demonstrate any experience with

monitoring protected distribution systems during working hours. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 141; Tab 6, SSD, at 64.

The protester argues that the agency's evaluation ignored other relevant information in its second and third references, both of which demonstrated relevant experience with monitoring protected distribution systems. Protest at 24. Under its second reference, the protester highlights the section of its proposal noting that it "set up, configured, maintained and troubleshot network components including all aspects of network server operations, routers, switches, firewalls, and gateways." Protest at 24; AR, Tab 10, Protester's Proposal, at 10. The agency explains that the protester's description of normal network set up, configuration, and maintenance, does not necessarily include protected distribution system work. COS-MOL at 33-34; AR, Tab 9, SSEB Chair Decl., at 8. Accordingly, the evaluators did not consider the protester's second reference to demonstrate any experience opening and closing Secret facilities or monitoring protected distribution systems. Id.; see AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 141; Tab 6, SSD, at 64.

Under its third reference, the protester argues the agency also ignored other information demonstrating relevant experience with monitoring protected distribution systems. Protest at 24. Specifically, the protester argues that the agency should have considered its proposed subcontractor's work evaluating "network components, security procedures, and process for potential exploitation from attack," providing "content filtering and intrusion detection systems and intrusion protection systems," and monitoring "network throughput, efficiency, and loading, and evaluated network integrity, security, and information protection," all of which were described in the network security SOW key area of the protester's narrative for its third reference.<sup>5</sup> Proposal at 24; AR, Tab 10, Protester's Proposal, at 13.

The agency explains that the protester described its third reference in the context of web-based work--e.g., content filtering, intrusion detection. COS-MOL at 34-35; AR, Tab 9, SSEB Chair Decl., at 9. According to the agency, this is different from the solicitation's requirement for monitoring protected distribution systems, which includes ensuring the safety of the system infrastructure by performing physical inspections of the wire or fiber optic system during working hours. Id. Based on the record before us, we have no basis to question the agency's evaluation. It is an offeror's responsibility to submit a well-written proposal, with adequately detailed information which clearly demonstrates compliance with the solicitation requirements allows a meaningful review by the procuring agency. Innovative Pathways, LLC, B-416100.2, June 13, 2018, 2018

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<sup>5</sup> We note that even if the described work was relevant to the solicitation's requirement for the provision of protected distribution system monitoring under the network operations center SOW key area, the agency would not have been obligated to consider it. The solicitation instructed offerors to format their organizational experience narratives into separate discussions for each of the five SOW key areas, and cautioned that in evaluating each individual SOW key area the agency would "consider only the text designated . . . for that particular SOW key area." RFP at 89, 94-95.

CPD ¶ 212 at 5. An offeror is responsible for affirmatively demonstrating the merits of its proposal, and, as here, risks the rejection of its proposal if it fails to do so. Adams and Assocs., Inc., B-417120.2, June 25, 2019, 2019 CPD ¶ 232 at 4.

In sum, based on the record before us, we conclude that the agency reasonably assessed a deficiency in the protester's proposal under the organizational experience factor because the protester's references demonstrated little to no experience relevant to managing a network incident ticket response system or monitoring protected distribution systems.

#### Server System Administration and Engineering SOW Key Area Deficiency

For the server system administration and engineering SOW key area, the solicitation requires the awardee(s) to "provide system administration services for enterprise Windows, UNIX/Linux, and Macintosh operating systems. RFP at 11. The solicitation further requires the awardee(s) to "manage enterprise servers, monitor infrastructure performance/availability, and complete root cause analysis of identified issues." Id. The solicitation explains that this work includes "automating system patch availability, and performing configuration management and compliance auditing," as well as hardening servers in compliance with applicable security technical implementation guidelines (STIGs) and developing process documentation. Id.

The record reflects that the agency evaluated each of the protester's three references as demonstrating little to no organizational experience relevant to the server system administration and engineering SOW key area. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 142; Tab 6, SSD, at 64-65. For example, the evaluators concluded that the protester's references did not demonstrate experience with system administration services for Macintosh operating systems. Id. The protester does not dispute that its references fail to demonstrate experience with Macintosh operating systems, and instead argues that it was irrational for the agency to discredit its references based on this lack of experience because the solicitation's SOW "establishes that the contractor(s) will be, for the most part, supporting Microsoft systems, and does not refer to Macintosh systems." Comments at 18. The protester is incorrect. As noted above, the technical requirements section of the solicitation provides that "[t]he contractor shall provide system administration services for enterprise Windows, UNIX/Linux, and Macintosh operating systems." RFP at 11. Accordingly, the agency reasonably concluded that the protester lacked the required experience.

Similarly, the evaluators concluded that the protester's references failed to demonstrate organizational experience with server or system hardening. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 142; Tab 6, SSD, at 64-65. Specifically, the evaluators found that the protester's first reference failed to demonstrate any organizational experience relevant to work areas such as automating system patch availability, performing configuration management and compliance auditing, and server hardening. Id. The protester argues that the agency ignored information demonstrating relevant experience in these areas. Protest at 25. We disagree. The protester's narrative explanation of its work under its first

reference contract explains that it “patch[ed] enterprise level equipment and interpret[ed] server operational characteristics, determine[d] the presence of problems, identif[ied] possible solutions” and implemented them in a timely manner. AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 7. Nowhere in its description of its work does the protester reference or explain that it was responsible for automating system patch availability<sup>6</sup> or hardening servers in compliance with applicable STIGs.

Similarly, the evaluators found that the protester’s second reference failed to demonstrate organizational experience with “hardening systems [in accordance with Defense Information Systems Agency’ STIGs] and developing process documentation,” and that the protester’s third reference did not demonstrate organizational experience with “server hardening.” AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 142; Tab 6, SSD, at 64-65. With regard to its second reference, the protester argues that the agency ignored information demonstrating experience with server hardening work; specifically its experience ensuring “that devices in the [customer] server farm were correctly configured to [Department of Defense] policy standards,” analyzing “configuration logs to identify failed processes and/or corrupted data sources,” and “reconfiguring” when needed. Protest at 25; AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 11. With regard to its third reference, the protester argues that the agency ignored information demonstrating its subcontractor’s experience “reconfiguring servers to enhance server security.” Protest at 25.

With respect to the protester’s second reference, the agency explains that the protester’s description of configuring equipment to Department of Defense policy standards is a “very broad statement” that does not indicate experience hardening servers in compliance with the specific STIGs indicated in the solicitation. COS-MOL at 36; AR, Tab 9, SSEB Chair Decl., at 9. With respect to the protester’s third reference, its proposal does not in fact include any information about work reconfiguring servers to enhance server security. See AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 12-15.

In sum, based on the record before us, we conclude that the agency reasonably assessed a deficiency in the protester’s proposal under the organizational experience

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<sup>6</sup> While the record reflects that the agency reasonably concluded that the protester’s first and second references failed to demonstrate organizational experience relevant to automating system patch availability, the protester’s narrative explanation of its proposed subcontractor’s work under its third reference did explain that the work included development of “[DELETED] for the automated distribution of operational system patches and [DELETED] that support [DELETED] and [DELETED] and [DELETED].” AR, Tab 10, Protester’s Proposal, at 15. Because one of the protester’s three references included system patch automation work, the agency incorrectly found the protester’s proposal deficient due to a lack of organizational experience automating patch availability. The protester was not competitively prejudiced by this error, however, as the record reflects that the agency reasonably found the protester’s proposal deficient in multiple other areas. See EA Eng’g, Science, and Tech., Inc., B-417361.1, B-417361.2, June 13, 2019, 2019 CPD ¶ 218 at 12-13.

factor because the protester's references demonstrated little to no experience relevant to working with Macintosh operating systems or with server or system hardening.

#### Evaluation In Accordance with the Solicitation

In addition to challenging each of the deficiencies and significant weaknesses assessed in its proposal, the protester argues that the agency deviated from the solicitation's stated evaluation criteria. The solicitation provided that the agency would evaluate an offeror's references collectively to assess the "breadth and depth of relevant experience in the SOW key areas," and that the sub-elements of each key area would "not be evaluated as subfactors." RFP at 94-95. The protester contends that, rather than evaluating its references collectively, the agency reviewed whether each reference individually demonstrated experience with each of the sub-elements of the five SOW key areas. Protest at 8.

We need not address the merits of this issue because it is clear the protester was not prejudiced even if the agency erred in this regard. Competitive prejudice is an essential element of a viable protest; where the protester fails to demonstrate that, but for the agency's actions, it would have had a substantial chance of receiving the award, there is no basis for finding prejudice, and our Office will not sustain the protest. EA Eng'g, Science, and Tech., Inc., supra at 12-13.

As discussed above, the agency reasonably assessed deficiencies in the protester's proposal based on its conclusion that all three of the protester's references demonstrated little to no organizational experience managing a network incident ticket response system, monitoring protected distribution systems, working with Macintosh operating systems, or performing server or system hardening. Accordingly, even if, as the protester alleges, the agency should have evaluated the references collectively, because none of the protester's references individually demonstrated organizational experience in some portions of the SOW key areas, it is impossible for the protester's references to have collectively demonstrated organizational experience in these areas. Therefore, it would serve no useful purpose for us to question the agency's evaluation in this regard. See CTA Inc., B-253654, Oct. 12, 1993, 93-2 CPD ¶ 218 at 5.

#### Consistency of the Organizational Experience and Past Performance Evaluations

Under the past performance factor, the agency evaluated the protester's references as recent and somewhat relevant with a satisfactory or better quality of performance. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 143-145; Tab 6, SSD, at 65-66. Based on this assessment, the agency assigned the protester's proposal a satisfactory confidence rating. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 145; Tab 6, SSD, at 66. The protester argues that the agency's evaluation results are "directly inconsistent," because it evaluated the same three references as lacking relevance to the point of being deficient under the organizational experience factor yet found them somewhat relevant and assigned a satisfactory confidence rating under the past performance factor. Protest at 12-13. The protester contends that because the solicitation set forth the same definitions of relevancy under

the two factors the agency's inconsistent evaluation findings are unreasonable. Id.; see RFP at 94-95.

Generally, an agency's evaluation under an experience factor is distinct from its evaluation of an offeror's past performance. Commercial Window Shield, B-400154, July 2, 2008, 2008 CPD ¶ 134 at 3. Specifically, as is the case here, the former focuses on the degree to which an offeror actually has performed similar work, whereas the latter focuses on the quality of the work. Id. Where a solicitation calls for the evaluation of experience and past performance, we will examine the record to ensure that the evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the solicitation's evaluation criteria and procurement statutes and regulations. EA Eng'g, Science, and Tech., Inc., supra at 11. The evaluation of experience and past performance, by its very nature, is subjective, and an offeror's disagreement with an agency's evaluation judgments does not demonstrate that those judgments are unreasonable. Glenn Def. Marine--Asia PTE, Ltd., B-402687.6, B-402687.7, Oct. 13, 2011, 2012 CPD ¶ 3 at 7.

Here, the solicitation provided that the agency's evaluation under the organizational experience factor would evaluate an offeror's experience performing similar work to determine if the offeror had faced "the kinds of challenges it will likely face" if awarded a contract. RFP at 94. In contrast, the past performance factor evaluation was to assess the quality of an offeror's performance in areas including quality of service, schedule, cost control, contract management, small business utilization, and regulatory compliance. Id. at 95-96. Thus, past performance related to how well a contractor performed, while organizational experience pertained to the type of work a contractor performed--two distinct factors. Given the fundamentally different nature of the evaluations, a rating in one factor would not automatically result in the same rating under the other. See Amyx, Inc., B-410623, B-410623.2, Jan. 16, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 45 at 15; see also Shaw-Parsons Infrastructure Recovery Consultants, LLC; Vanguard Recovery Assistance, JV, B-401679.4 et al., Mar. 10, 2010, 2010 CPD ¶ 77 at 14 (noting that an interpretation of the evaluation criteria that would effectively require the agency to perform identical evaluations under what are otherwise two separate and distinct evaluation factors would not be a reasonable interpretation of the solicitation).

More specifically, in assigning the protester's proposal a satisfactory confidence rating under the past performance factor, the record reflects that the evaluators concluded the protester's references demonstrated relevant work for some of the five SOW key areas, and primarily focused on the customer ratings for the protester's three references. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 143-145. For example, the evaluators highlighted as a significant strength that the protester received exceptional ratings under two of its references in the areas of quality, schedule, management, and regulatory compliance, as well as its rating of exceptional in the area of cost control under one reference. Id. at 144.

On the other hand, with respect to organizational experience, the record reflects that the evaluators reviewed whether the protester's references demonstrated relevant work in

all five SOW key areas, and reasonably concluded that the protester failed to demonstrate relevant experience in some of them. AR, Tab 8, SSEB Report, at 140-142. On this record, we find no merit to the protester's argument that it was unreasonable for the agency to conclude that the protester's references were somewhat relevant under the past performance factor while also concluding that the references were deficient under the organizational experience factor because the protester failed to demonstrate acceptable relevant experience. See Amyx, Inc., supra, at 14-15; CSI, Inc.; Visual Awareness Techs. and Consulting, Inc., B-407332.5 et al., Jan. 12, 2015, 2015 CPD ¶ 35 at 5 n.3.

The protest is denied.

Thomas H. Armstrong  
General Counsel