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Decision

Matter of: Systems Technologies, Inc.

File: B-404985; B-404985.2

Date: July 20, 2011

Marc Lamer, Esq., Kostos & Lamer, PC, for the protester.
James J. McCullough, Esq., and Michael J. Anstett, Esq., Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP, for Sciences Applications International Corporation;
Thomas L. McGovern III, Esq., Andrew C. Ertley, Esq., and Emily M.Q. Schriver, Esq., Hogan Lovells US LLP, for General Dynamics Information Technology, Inc.;
and Nicole Y. Beeler, Esq., John E. Jensen, Esq., Evan D. Wesser, Esq., and Daniel S. Herzfeld, Esq., Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, for NCI Information Systems, Inc., the intervenors.
Wade L. Brown, Esq., and Janet K. Baker, Esq., Department of the Army, for the agency.
Charles W. Morrow, Esq., and James A. Spangenberg, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

1. Agency's significant upward adjustments to the protester's low proposed labor hours based on the independent government estimate in cost realism analysis, where the protester's proposal failed to provide sufficient detail, was reasonably supported by the record and hearing testimony.
 2. Agency improperly failed to make downward adjustment in the protester's proposed costs in cost realism analysis to exclude costs for work that was not within the scope of the solicited requirement; however, the protester was not prejudiced by this error.
 3. Protest of technical evaluation of protester's proposal is denied where the protester's arguments merely disagree with the agency's evaluation judgment.
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DECISION

Systems Technologies, Inc. (Systek), of West Long Branch, New Jersey, protests awards of contracts to General Dynamics Information Technology, Inc. (GDIT), of Fairfax, Virginia, NCI Information Systems, Inc. (NCI), of Reston, Virginia, and

Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), of McLean, Virginia, under request for proposals (RFP) No. W9128Z-10-R-0002, issued by the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Life Cycle Command, Army Contracting Command, Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for information systems engineering and technology support services. Systek challenges the evaluation of its proposal.

We deny the protest.

BACKGROUND

The RFP, issued on September 9, 2010, sought proposals to support the “Total Engineering and Integration Services” (TEIS) III program, which provides information systems engineering and information technology support services to the U.S. Army Information Systems Command (ISEC) and its customers worldwide. The support is for ISEC’s engineering related activities in all aspects of information and communication systems, including planning, design, development, engineering, implementation, procurement, logistics, evaluation, test, sustainment, and ancillary services. These services will be provided worldwide, sometimes in challenging environments, such as remote locations, hostile territories, and secure facilities.

The RFP contemplated up to five awards (including two small businesses) of indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contracts, under which the awardees would compete for fixed-price, cost-reimbursement, and time and materials task orders. Award was to be made on a best-value basis considering four evaluation factors: (1) technical, (2) performance risk, (3) small business participation, and (4) cost/price.¹ The technical factor was said to be significantly more important than the performance risk factor, which was equal in weight to the small business participation factor, which was slightly more important than cost/price. The non-cost/price factors when combined were significantly more important than cost/price. RFP at 119.

Under the technical factor, the RFP listed two subfactors: (1) sample tasks (which included three sample tasks of equal importance) and (2) management and staffing. The RFP explained that both the sample tasks and management and staffing subfactors would be evaluated for understanding of the problem, adequacy of response, and feasibility of approach.

The RFP stated that the sample tasks were designed “to test an offeror’s expertise and innovation capabilities to respond to the types of situations that may be

¹ The performance risk factor considered the offeror’s past performance to assess the relative risks associated with the offeror’s likelihood of success in performing the requirements. The small business participation factor considered the level of small business commitment.

encountered in performance of the contracts,” and consequently “[o]fferors will not be given an opportunity to correct or revise a Sample Task response.” RFP at 120. For each sample task, offerors were instructed to provide a detailed technical approach describing how the offeror would solve the requirement. The response was to include a narrative describing the technical approach; a work breakdown structure (WBS), to include a three level breakdown and a basis of estimate (BOE); a quality control plan; a risk mitigation plan; and a project work schedule. RFP attach. 6, Sample Task 1 at 1; attach. 7, Sample Task 2, at 1. In considering the feasibility of approach aspect of the sample task subfactor, the RFP explained that the proposal would be evaluated to determine whether the proposed approach was workable and achievable; whether the offeror’s approach gave the government a high level of confidence of successful performance; and whether the proposed hours and labor mix were realistic. RFP at 120.

The cost/price factor considered the realism of the offeror’s proposed costs in sample tasks 1, 2, and 3 in relation to the offeror’s specific technical approach. This was used in determining the most probable cost to the government. The total evaluated sample costs was the sum of the most probable costs and proposed fee amounts for the three sample tasks. This sum would then be multiplied by a cost multiplication factor of 64.1363 to derive the total evaluated amount for cost reimbursable contract work. To this figure, the total evaluated price for the time and materials work would be added to determine the total evaluated cost of each proposal. RFP at 121-22.

The Army established separate evaluation teams to evaluate the proposals under each evaluation factor.² The non-cost/price evaluation teams utilized an adjectival scale to evaluate the proposals under the non-cost/price factors.³ In evaluating the offerors’ responses to the sample tasks, the sample task team upwardly adjusted an offerors’ proposed labor hours if the offeror’s proposed labor hours for a particular sample task requirement were considered unrealistic. These adjustments, and other considerations, became the basis for the cost evaluation team’s most probable cost determinations. Hearing Transcript (Tr.) at 36-37.

Fourteen offerors, including Systek, GDIT, NCI and SAIC, responded to the RFP by the October 12 closing date. Based on the initial evaluations, the proposals of

² The evaluation teams included a source selection evaluation board, a sample task subfactor team, a management and staffing subfactor team, a performance risk factor team, a small business team, and a cost/price team.

³ The ratings for the technical, management and staffing, and small business participation factors were outstanding, good, acceptable, susceptible to being made acceptable and unacceptable. The ratings for each sample task were outstanding, good, acceptable, and unacceptable.

Systek, GDIT, NCI, and SAIC were included in the competitive range. Between January 19 and February 16, 2011, the Army conducted discussions with each offeror in the competitive range concerning their proposal, except with regard to the sample task responses. Final proposal revisions were received from offerors on February 18. The final evaluation results were as follows:

	GDIT	NCI	SAIC	SYSTEK
TECHNICAL	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	ACCEPTABLE
Sample Tasks	Good	Good	Good	Acceptable
Management and Staffing	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
PERFORMANCE RISK	LOW RISK	LOW RISK	LOW RISK	LOW RISK
SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
EVALUATED COST⁴	\$285,982,055	\$221,479,621	\$207,684,055	\$318,660,513

Agency Report (AR), Tab 17, Source Selection Document at 1-2.

Based on the evaluation, the source selection authority (SSA) determined that the proposals of GDIT, NCI, and SAIC were the best value and that these firms should receive awards. The SSA noted that Systek received a rating of acceptable for the technical factor, the most heavily-weighted evaluation factor, as compared to the good ratings of the three selected offerors. The SSA further noted that Systek had a significantly higher evaluated cost/price than any of the selected offerors. The SSA consequently determined that Systek's proposal was not among the most highly-rated proposals and excluded it from the competition. AR, Tab 17, Source Selection Decision at 4. The Army awarded contracts to GDIT, NCI, and SAIC on February 23. After a debriefing, this protest followed.

DISCUSSION

Cost Realism Analysis

The record shows that the Army found that Systek proposed too few labor hours to perform sample tasks 1 and 2. The Army evaluators thus made several significant adjustments to Systek's proposed labor hours, which the cost evaluation team utilized to calculate the most probable cost of Systek's proposal. Systek questions the propriety of these labor hour adjustments and the resulting most probable cost

⁴ The Army's independent government cost estimate (IGCE), after applying the 64.1363 multiplication factor, was \$354,088,495.

adjustments. Systek argues that the adjustments were inappropriate and undocumented, and fundamentally changed its technical approach by allocating a greater percentage of hours to less qualified employees than offered in Systek's task order response. Systek also argues that the agency's reliance on the IGCE in making the most probable cost adjustments was irrational and represented unequal treatment because it did not reasonably consider Systek's technical approach and was not used in evaluating the task order responses of the other offerors, even though their proposed staffing widely diverged from the IGCE.

When an agency evaluates proposals for the award of a cost-reimbursement contract, an offeror's proposed estimated cost of contract performance is not considered controlling since, regardless of the costs proposed by the offeror, the government is bound to pay the contractor its actual and allowable costs. Metro Mach. Corp., B-295744, B-295744.2, Apr. 21, 2005, 2005 CPD ¶ 112 at 9; Hanford Env'tl. Health Found., B-292858.2, B-292858.5, Apr. 7, 2004, 2004 CPD ¶ 164 at 9. Consequently, a cost realism analysis must be performed by the agency to determine the extent to which an offeror's proposed costs represent what the contract costs are likely to be under the offeror's technical approach, assuming reasonable economy and efficiency. Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) §§ 15.305(a)(1), 15.404-1(d)(1), (2); The Futures Group Int'l, B-281274.2, Mar. 3, 1999, 2000 CPD ¶ 147 at 3.

A cost realism analysis is the process of independently reviewing and evaluating specific elements of each offeror's cost estimate to determine whether the estimated proposed cost elements are realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a clear understanding of the requirements, and are consistent with the unique methods of performance and materials described in the offeror's proposal. FAR § 15.404-1(d)(1); Advanced Comms. Sys., Inc., B-283650 et al., Dec. 16, 1999, 2000 CPD ¶ 3 at 5. An offeror's proposed costs should be adjusted when appropriate based on the results of the cost realism analysis. FAR § 15.404-1(d)(2)(ii). Our review of an agency's cost realism evaluation is limited to determining whether the cost analysis is reasonably based and not arbitrary. Jacobs COGEMA, LLC, B-290125.2, B-290125.3, Dec. 18, 2002, 2003 CPD ¶ 16 at 26.

For sample task 1, offerors were required to develop an engineering package as part of an effort to engineer, furnish, install, and test (EFI&T) for a Major Headquarters Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and intelligence/information technology relocation project in Germany. The project involved performing site surveys, and included developing the following products: the facility wiring and design criteria, a system design plan, an engineering installation plan, a system acceptance test plan, and an installation schedule. Although Systek was rated acceptable technically for this sample task, and was found to have proposed an

adequate labor skill mix for the task,⁵ the evaluators found that Systek had proposed a low level of hours for completing the detailed engineering and design related requirements of site surveys, system design plan, detailed engineering, system acceptance test plan and installation schedule. The agency therefore found a weakness in Systek's proposal, and made three significant adjustments to Systek's proposed labor hours: the facility wiring and design criteria work was adjusted from 1,852 proposed labor hours to 4,042 labor hours; the detailed engineering work was adjusted from 916 proposed labor hours to 4,228 labor hours; and the system acceptance test plan work was adjusted from 702 proposed labor hours to 2,534 labor hours. AR, Tab 13a, Final Evaluation Report for Systek, at 4-6; Hearing exh. A.

For sample task 2, offerors were required to develop an engineering package as part of an EFI&T effort for a new communication system in Afghanistan to provide wideband digital connectivity to deployed users in that area of operation. This system was to consist of two parts: (1) a fixed strategic satellite communication (SATCOM) system and (2) a new core backbone network. Again, the evaluators found the task order response technically acceptable, albeit with a minimally feasible approach, but with a realistic labor mix. However, the evaluators found that Systek's response contained the significant weakness of proposing significantly low hours for completing three SATCOM system related requirements. As a result, Systek's proposed labor hours for detailed engineering were adjusted from 1,000 proposed labor hours to 2,592 labor hours; SATCOM installation was adjusted from 2,790 proposed labor hours to 11,250 labor hours; and SATCOM engineering validation (EV)/acceptance testing (AT) was adjusted from 1,215 proposed labor hours to 5,500 labor hours. AR, Tab 13a, Final Evaluation Report for Systek, at 6-9; Hearing exh. A.

Here, because the agency report, including contemporaneous evaluation documentation, did not completely explain the agency's rationale for making significant adjustments to Systek's proposed labor hours, our Office conducted a hearing in this matter. While we generally give little weight to reevaluations prepared in the heat of the adversarial process, post-protest explanations that provide a detailed rationale for contemporaneous conclusions--and as is the case here, simply fill in previously unrecorded details--will generally be considered in our review of the rationality of selection decisions, so long as those explanations are credible and consistent with the contemporaneous record. Remington Arms Co., Inc., B-297374, B-297374.2, Jan. 12, 2006, 2006 CPD ¶ 32 at 12. As discussed

⁵ The evaluators found that "[Systek's] methods and approach in meeting the requirements in a timely manner provide the Government confidence of successful performance with the required schedule [and that] [t]he proposed labor mix is realistic for the described approach." AR, Tab 13a, Final Evaluation Report, at 5.

below, based on the contemporaneous record and credible hearing testimony consistent with the record, we find the agency's evaluation of the task order responses and cost realism to be reasonable.

To explain the process that the Army utilized to evaluate the realism of the offerors' proposed labor hours, including Systek's, the Army produced five witnesses at the hearing: the contracting officer, a member of the source selection advisory council (SSAC), the chair of the sample task evaluation team, a member of the sample task evaluation team, and a member of the cost team. The record evidences that the agency witnesses, particularly those who were responsible for developing the sample tasks and IGCE and for evaluating the proposals' labor mixes and labor hours, possessed extensive knowledge and experience with estimating hours to perform the work required by the sample task. For example, the SSAC member, who developed the sample tasks, is a technical director for ISEC, has a degree in electrical engineering, has worked with ISEC since 1985, and has been a lead engineer on three major Army moves (in Germany, Panama, and Puerto Rico). Tr. at 77-79. In addition, the chair of the sample task evaluation team, who also helped develop the sample task, is an integration systems engineer with a degree in electronics engineering; has been a project engineer on SATCOM installations; has personally performed several installations; and has overseen, managed and directed personnel doing installations. Tr. at 87, 105-06, 120-21.

In evaluating Systek's proposal, including the specific labor hour adjustments made to its proposal, the Army considered Systek's narrative technical approach, BOE, WBS, project schedule, and skill mix. See Tr. at 35-36, 113. The witnesses attributed the significant labor hour adjustments that were made to Systek's proposal primarily to the lack of detail that the evaluators found in Systek's responses to these two sample tasks. See Tr. at 46-50, 80-81, 121-22, 220. The agency witnesses testified that while Systek's proposal focused more on what it would do to meet the sample task requirements, the agency also sought information about how the offeror would perform the agency's sample tasks. See Tr. at 80-81, 218-19. The witnesses testified that this lack of detail increased the Army's reliance on the IGCE, and that adjustments to Systek's proposal based on the hours in the IGCE were only made when there was a lack of sufficient detail in the sample task responses, such that there was no basis to conclude that an offer was inconsistent with the approach encompassed in the "government solution," as set forth in the IGCE. See Tr. at 46-50, 80-81, 113-14, 121-22, 220. For example, the chair of the sample team testified "if the contractor or offeror . . . parroted back what [the contractor document requirements lists] stated . . . and really didn't give us anything more than that, we assumed that to be the government solution, and that's when we would, you know, start using the IGCE as a baseline or starting point to make adjustments." Tr. at 114.

The Army explains that contrary to the protester's arguments, these adjustments did not introduce any new labor categories or significantly alter the distribution of hours

per labor category, and therefore the agency did not change fundamentally Systek's technical approach or labor mix. An example to illustrate this point involved the Army's significant adjustment to Systek's proposed 2,790 labor hours for SATCOM installation under task order 2, where the chair testified that the proposal lacked detail for work that the IGCE estimated at 15,000 labor hours. See Tr. at 113-114, 123. The chair explained that the RFP required the offeror to describe its approach to conducting each installation task. See RFP Sample Task 2 at 4; Tr. at 117-20. The chair also testified that although Systek's response met the sample task requirements for the SATCOM installation, it did not include much explanation of how it derived its specific number of labor hours.⁶ Tr. at 121-22. Moreover, in determining that Systek's proposed labor hours for this work were unrealistically low, the evaluators specifically considered Systek's labor mix for this work, which was primarily based on technicians on site, rather than engineers. Tr. at 127-28. The chair stated that while 15,000 hours was quite a bit more than 2,790 hours, the agency did not simply mechanically adjust Systek's hours for this requirement up to the IGCE level because the agency understood that its estimate was a conservative estimate for the work.⁷ The chair testified that given that Systek's proposal reflected a minimally detailed approach, the agency concluded that 11,250 hours was the right number. The chair explained that the agency reached this conclusion based on its ISEC experience and historical data, and the narrative in Systek's proposal, which did not set out an approach different from what the agency anticipated in the IGCE. See Tr. at 137-38; Hearing exh. A

By contrast, the chair explained (and our review of the record, including the proposals, confirms) that the other offerors' (GDIT's, SAIC's, and NCI's) approaches were more detailed, and gave the evaluators more confidence that these offerors knew with greater precision what might be involved in sending a team to Afghanistan to perform the tasks. See Tr. at 132. Thus, the evaluators concluded that the proposals of GDIT, SAIC, and NCI presented less risk. Further, the contracting officer testified that the evaluators found that the details in these proposals indicated greater efficiencies and a higher level of understanding, which gave the agency greater confidence that the work could be performed with fewer labor hours than the IGCE. Tr. at 49-50. As an example, the chair discussed the details included in SAIC's proposal for the Task 2 SATCOM installation, including the specific training and experience of the personnel who will perform the installation; the chair also testified that this level of detail was absent from Systek's proposal. Tr. at 134.

⁶ The chair also testified that the agency did not have confidence that the protester could do five installs (two X bands, a KU band, an ICF, and a base band) in 2,790 hours. Tr. at 122.

⁷ The Chair testified that the IGCE for the requirement used a conservative approach for the requirement, and took into account all scenarios, such as the use of redeployment centers that would increase the required hours. Tr. at 136.

Another example discussed at the hearing was the agency's adjustment to Sytek's proposed hours for SATCOM EV/AT from 1,215 labor hours to 5,500 labor hours. The IGCE for this requirement was 6,300 labor hours. Here again, the chair convincingly explained how Systek's proposal contained minimal detail and did not offer anything different from the government's approach as reflected in the IGCE; this conclusion led to the agency's upward adjustment to Systek's proposed labor hours. See Tr. at 142-45. The chair also explained that the Army did not adjust the proposal up to the full 6,300 labor hours because the IGCE included some technical writers and draftspeople that did not appear relevant to Systek's proposed approach here. See Tr. at 147. While Systek argues that the Army's evaluation did not account for its use of higher-level technicians, the Army found that Systek's approach also included lower-level technicians, which would impact the efficiency at which Systek would be able to perform the tests; in sum, the Army did not find Systek's low proposed labor hours to be realistic. See Tr. at 147-49.

On the other hand, the chair testified that NCI, which had proposed [DELETED] labor hours, was only adjusted up to [DELETED] labor hours because its proposal included more detail and offered more [DELETED]. Tr. at 150-53. The chair further testified that the agency did not adjust SAIC's estimate of [DELETED] labor hours because the proposal included [DELETED], and an [DELETED]. See Tr. at 156-58. The chair also testified that GDIT's estimate of [DELETED] labor hours was accepted because its proposal was detailed and included [DELETED] for the requirement. Tr. at 158.

We have reviewed the totality of the agency record, including contemporaneous documents supporting the labor hour adjustments, and the testimony of the Army explaining the contemporaneous evaluation of the proposals, for each labor hour adjustment made to Systek's proposal. Based on our review, we find that the Army has reasonably explained the basis for the adjustments made to Systek's proposed labor hours consistent with the contemporaneous record. As noted in the testimony above, our review supports the agency's view that Systek's proposal did not provide as sufficient a level of detail in response to the sample tasks as the other offerors, which resulted in a weakness and a significant weakness being assigned to Systek's proposal, and the significant adjustments to its proposed labor hours. The record also shows that the agency, when it made its most probable cost adjustments, considered Systek's labor mix and reasonably distributed the added hours across labor categories included in the task order response. Thus, we see no basis to find unreasonable the agency's upward adjustments to determine Systek's most probable cost or the agency's failure to make similar adjustments to the awardees' proposed costs.⁸

⁸ Systek argues that to the extent the agency's determinations that its proposed labor hours reflected a lack of understanding, this was inconsistent with the finding
(continued...)

For the record, however, there is one error in the agency's most probable cost evaluation. In this regard, the agency noted that Systek had proposed 5,504 labor hours for core backbone network installation, which was part of task order 2, and that this work was not within the scope of the requirement.⁹ No downward adjustments were made to Sytek's proposed costs to reflect this error, but the evaluators assigned a weakness because they viewed this error as evidence that Systek did not fully understand the scope of the sample task. The assignment of a weakness in this case was clearly warranted. However, we think the agency erred in not eliminating these costs from Systek's proposal in determining its most probable cost.

As noted above, the purpose of a cost realism analysis is to determine the extent to which an offeror's proposed costs represent what the contract costs are likely to be under the offeror's technical approach. The end product of an agency's cost realism analysis should be a total evaluated cost of what the government realistically expects to pay for the offeror's proposal effort, as it is the agency's evaluated cost and not the offeror's proposed cost that must be the basis of the source selection determination. FAR § 15.404-1(d)(2)(i). Thus, it was improper for the Army to include the costs of work that the government would not receive as part of the task requirement. See FAR § 15.404-1(d)(2)(ii) ("The probable cost is determined by adjusting each offeror's proposed cost . . . to reflect any additions or reductions in cost elements to realistic levels based on the results of the cost realism analysis" (emphasis supplied)); Priority One Servs., Inc., B-288836, B-288836.2, Dec. 17, 2001, 2002 CPD ¶ 79 at 3-4 (protest sustained where agency concludes that protester misunderstood the requirements for other direct costs; most probable cost should have been reduced to reflect agency's judgment as to costs actually to be incurred); Kellogg Brown & Root Servs., Inc., B-298694 et al., Nov. 16, 2006, 2006 CPD ¶ 160 at 5-8 (agency properly made downward adjustment to protester's probable cost where indirect cost rates were overstated).

Nevertheless, this error provides no basis to sustain the protest. In this regard, the protester states the total impact of this error accounted for an additional evaluated

(...continued)

of the performance risk team that "little doubt exists that [Systek] can estimate accurately projected costs of performance and has the processes in place to ensure that costs incurred are fair and reasonable based on adequate price competition and comprehensive price/cost analysis." AR, Tab 13d, Performance Risk Assessment, at 1. However, the performance risk assessment, which focuses on the offeror's past performance, is completely separate from the evaluation of the task orders.

⁹ Systek concedes that this work was not required. Protester's Post-hearing Comments at 2.

cost of \$21,510,737 to its proposal. Protester's Comments at 23. Thus, even taking into account this error, Systek's lower-rated proposal would still have the highest evaluated cost of the four competitive range offerors. Under the circumstances, we do not think Systek was prejudiced by this error and we will not disturb the award decision.¹⁰ See Alsalam Aircraft Co., B-401298.4, Jan. 8, 2010, 2010 CPD ¶ 23 at 9-10.

Other Issues

Systek argues that the Army misevaluated its solution to sample task 3. Systek first argues that the proposal should have received a significant strength for its description of the site survey under this task because this strength met the definition of a significant strength.¹¹ However, the determination of whether or not this feature of Systek's proposal should receive a significant strength is reasonably within the agency's evaluation discretion and Systek has not shown the agency's judgment here was unreasonable.

Second, Systek argues that the proposal should not have received a weakness under this sample task because of the lack of details in its engineering design plan. However, the agency responds that while the evaluation team did not articulate examples of the details that were lacking in the contemporaneous evaluation documents, the Army now provides numerous examples of details that were missing from the proposals. These include the elements of top level architecture; how firewall configuration would be addressed in the plan; access control lists; how enterprise system management would be incorporated in the plan; and how to

¹⁰ Systek also protests that the Army failed to provide Systek with meaningful discussions regarding the evaluated labor hour shortfalls for performing the sample tasks. However, the RFP expressly provided "[o]fferors will not be given an opportunity to correct or revise a Sample Task response." RFP at 120. Thus, it was clear from the outset of this procurement that the agency would not hold discussions regarding sample task responses. To the extent Systek disagrees with this provision, it is alleging an impropriety in a solicitation that was apparent prior the time set for receipt of initial proposals; such complaints must be filed prior to the time set for receipt of initial proposals. See 4 C.F.R. § 21.2(a)(1) (2011).

¹¹ A strength, including a significant strength, was defined as:

Any aspect of a proposal that when judged against a stated evaluation criterion enhances the merit of the proposal or increases the probability of successful performance of the contract. A significant strength appreciably enhances the merit of a proposal or appreciably increases the probability of successful contract performance.

AR, Tab 8, Source Selection Evaluation Plan, at 34.

implement a network architecture on an Army installation, such as getting digging permission. AR at 36-37. Our review of the record supports the agency's conclusions in this respect. Although Systek argues that its proposal should have received a higher rating for this sample task, its disagreement with the agency's evaluation does not establish that the agency's evaluation was unreasonable. See Smiths Detection, Inc.; Amer. Sci. and Eng'g, Inc., B-402168.4 et al., Feb. 9, 2011, 2011 CPD ¶ 39 at 6-7.

There are numerous other examples of Systek's disagreements with the Army's evaluation. These include its contention that its proposal should have been rated outstanding instead of acceptable under the management and staffing subfactor because the Army found Systek's integrated digital environment portal to merit only a strength rating rather than a significant strength rating, and also failed to recognize other proposal strengths. Systek also argues that the Army improperly rated its proposal good, instead of outstanding, under the small business participation factor. Based on our review, none of these expressions of disagreement establish that the Army's evaluation was unreasonable.

The protest is denied.

Lynn H. Gibson
General Counsel