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**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

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Decision

Matter of: STG, Inc.

File: B-403713.4

Date: June 15, 2011

Claude P. Goddard, Esq., David P. Hendel, Esq., Daniel J. Donohue, Esq., and Sarah M. Graves, Esq., Husch Blackwell, for the protester.

Robert A. Russo, Esq., Frank V. DiNicola, Esq., and Desiree A. DiCorcia, Esq., Department of Veterans Affairs, for the agency.

Mary G. Curcio, Esq., and David A. Ashen, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

Protest that agency unreasonably assigned proposal a rating of unacceptable for sample task orders and technical factor is denied where agency explains that the lack of detail in the proposal called into question whether protester understood the sample task orders and had a feasible approach to addressing them, and the protester does not address the agency's explanation.

DECISION

STG, Inc., of Reston, Virginia, protests the elimination from the competitive range of the proposal it submitted in response to the Department of Veterans Affairs request for proposals (RFP) No. VA118-10-RP-0052, for information technology equipment and services. STG asserts that the agency unreasonably evaluated its proposal.

We deny the protest.

The solicitation provided for the award of up to 15 contracts on a "best value" basis considering the following factors: technical (with subfactors for management and sample task orders (STO)), past performance, veterans involvement, small business participation commitment, and price. An offeror had to receive a rating of acceptable for the technical factor, each technical subfactor, and small business participation to be considered for award. RFP § M.2.A. The agency received more than 90 proposals, including a proposal from STG. STG's proposal was rated unacceptable for the technical factor, based on a rating of unacceptable for the STO subfactor, and consequently was not included in the competitive range. STG protests the evaluation.

The solicitation included three STOs (STO 1, STO 2, and STO 3), the responses to which were to be evaluated as follows:

a. The Sample Tasks are designed to test the offeror's expertise and innovative capabilities to respond to the types of situations that may be encountered in performance. . . Accordingly, the offerors will not be given an opportunity to correct or revise a sample task response. The evaluation of each sample task will consider the following:

(1) Understanding of Problems--The proposal will be evaluated to determine the extent to which the offeror demonstrates a clear understanding of all features involved in solving the problems and meeting the requirements presented by the sample task; and the extent to which uncertainties are identified and resolutions proposed.

(2) Feasibility of Approach--The proposal will be evaluated to determine whether the offeror's methods and approach to meeting the sample task requirements provided the Government with a high level of confidence of successful completion. The evaluation will also consider the realism of the labor categories being proposed in the offeror's response to the sample tasks.

RFP § M.2.C.

STG's proposal was rated unacceptable for STOs 2 and 3. STG challenges the weaknesses and significant weaknesses assigned by the agency under STOs 2 and 3, asserting that its proposal should have been rated acceptable or higher. In reviewing protests against an agency's proposal evaluation, our role is limited to ensuring that the evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the terms of the solicitation and applicable statutes and regulations. Philips Med. Sys. of N. Am., Co., B-293945.2, June 17, 2004, 2004 CPD ¶ 129 at 2. We have reviewed the record and find STG's arguments to be without merit.

For example, under STO 2 (software development), offerors were tasked to design, develop and field a single financial system to replace three current financial systems used by approximately 100,000 VA personnel. RFP § J, attach. 15, Sample Task 2. Offerors were required to describe their approach to executing all tasks necessary for this effort, and list the labor categories required to perform each element of the task. Id. In order to evaluate the offerors' responses to the STO, the agency created a list of key focus and lower level focus areas that it believed an offeror would have to address to demonstrate that it understood the task and had a feasible approach to solving it. With respect to STO 2, those focus and lower level focus areas were: data migration (data migration planning, data requirements sessions with legacy system owners/users, data cleansing strategy, and migration process);

training (training strategy and plan, developing training materials, training environment, and training delivery); testing (test planning, methods for test support, conducting tests, and providing test activities); and deployment/post go-live support (support planning, fielding strategy, help desk, and support teams). Sample Task Evaluation Report at 3.

STG's proposal was assigned a number of weaknesses and significant weaknesses under STO 2 which ultimately led to an overall unacceptable rating for that STO. STG asserts that the information in its proposal was sufficient such that the proposal should have received a rating of acceptable or higher for STO 2. For example, STG asserts that it explained its approach to data migration and data reconciliation, as well as the risks related to data migration and how it would resolve them.

The agency, however, explains that the detail provided by STG in its proposal did not demonstrate an ability to execute an appropriate technical strategy for a complex financial data migration effort as required, and therefore created a risk that data would not be allowed to migrate from the legacy systems to the new system. For example, the agency reports that STG's proposal did not provide detail regarding an overall strategy for accomplishing the data migration effort, identifying different types of data such as static and transaction data, developing and allowing government review and approval of data migration plans, establishing or maintaining a staging environment for migration processing, or executing mock or trial migration loads. Contracting Officer's Statement (COS) at 9. Further, according to the agency, STG's proposal included only minimal detail with respect to meeting with legacy system owners and business stakeholders to analyze the current data in the legacy systems; documenting data requirements; developing data migration rules; mapping the data from the legacy data stores to the new system; identifying dirty/redundant/discrepant data; handling date exceptions; and coordinating activities with the end-users to clean the data before, during, and after the migration effort. Id. As a result, the agency concluded that STG lacked an understanding of the effort required by STO 2.

In response to the agency's explanation of the evaluated weaknesses in its STO 2 discussion, STG generally asserts that the agency did not address the specific arguments it made regarding the detail it did include in its proposal. STG however, does not dispute or otherwise show to be unreasonable the agency's analysis of the specific weaknesses in its proposal regarding data migration. Nor does STG explain why the missing information would not be relevant to the successful performance of the STO.

Similarly, with respect to the remaining weaknesses the agency found in STG's proposal regarding STOs 2 and 3, the agency has explained the basis for its conclusions that the weaknesses existed. In its comments, however, STG does not specifically rebut the weaknesses cited by the agency. Since STG has the burden of demonstrating that the evaluation was unreasonable, but has not addressed the

agency's identified specific weaknesses, or otherwise shown them to be unreasonable, we have no basis to find that the agency unreasonably concluded that STG's responses to STOs 2 and 3 were unacceptable. American Cybernetic Corp., B-310551.2, February 1, 2008, 2008 CPD ¶ 40 at 3. Further, given the reasonably evaluated unacceptability of STG's STO 2 and 3 responses, and the consequent unacceptable rating under the technical factor, we have no basis to question elimination of STG's proposal from the competitive range.

The protest is denied.

Lynn H. Gibson
General Counsel