



Decision

Matter of: Adelaide Environmental Health Associates, Inc.

File: B-404164

Date: January 13, 2011

Stephanie A. Soter and John W. Soter, Adelaide Environmental Health Associates, Inc., for the protester.

Tony A. Ross, Esq., Department of Veterans Affairs, for the agency.

Jacqueline Maeder, Esq., and David A. Ashen, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

Protest is denied where agency reasonably downgraded protester's quotation for failing to provide sufficient detail regarding its proposed management approach and schedule.

DECISION

Adelaide Environmental Health Associates, Inc., of Brewster, New York, protests the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) issuance of a task order to Aerosol Monitoring and Analysis, Inc., of Hanover, Maryland, under request for quotations (RFQ) No. VA-245-10-RQ-0241, for a comprehensive asbestos survey at selected VA medical centers in the VA Capital Health Care Network. Adelaide challenges the evaluation of its quotation.

We deny the protest.

The solicitation, issued pursuant to Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) part 8.4, was open to vendors holding General Services Administration (GSA) contracts under special item number 899-1 (Environmental Consulting Services). The RFQ contemplated the issuance of a fixed-price task order to conduct a comprehensive survey of VA medical centers in Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. for the presence of friable and non-friable asbestos-containing materials. The required work was to be completed within 180 days of issuance of the task order. RFQ amend. 3, at 5.

The solicitation provided a detailed scope of work including, among other specific tasks: review of building records, past removal actions, inspection reports, maintenance records, and other relevant documents; an asbestos assessment of accessible building space and identification of the types, locations, and quantities of asbestos; collection of bulk samples of suspect material for laboratory analysis; and preparation of a survey report for each medical center. RFQ at 5-17.

The RFQ provided for quotations to be evaluated on a “best value” basis, considering technical factors (including corporate experience, personnel qualifications, and management approach), past performance, and price. Id. at 31. The technical and past performance factors were more important than price. Id.

Under the solicitation schedule, vendors were required to provide a price and a delivery date for each of five solicitation line items, each representing a different VA medical center, as well as a discount factor in the event that all line items were ordered. In addition, under the corporate experience subfactor, vendors were required to demonstrate experience with work similar in size and scope, including providing information (type and size of facilities audited and the services provided) regarding surveys performed during the last 5 years. Under the personnel qualifications subfactor, vendors were required to provide information on relevant work experience and educational background of proposed staff. Under the management approach subfactor, vendors were required, at a minimum, to furnish a management plan which showed an understanding of the tasks to be performed and included a schedule for the required services. Under the past performance evaluation factor, vendors were required to provide a minimum of three past performance references for work similar in cost and technical scope. Id. at 3.

Eight vendors submitted quotations in response to the RFQ. The agency’s technical evaluation panel identified eight strengths and no weaknesses in Aerosol’s quotation, and a single strength and four weaknesses in Adelaide’s quotation. Agency Report (AR), Tab D2, Technical Evaluation Panel Recommendation of Award at 2-3. Although Aerosol’s price (\$268,375) was higher than Adelaide’s (\$213,000), the superiority of Aerosol’s quotation under the more important non-price factors led the agency to determine that Aerosol’s quotation represented the best value. Tab D2, Technical Evaluation Panel Recommendation of Award at 2; AR at 2. Upon learning of the resulting issuance of a task order to Aerosol, and after receiving a debriefing, Adelaide filed this protest with our Office.

The agency advised Adelaide in its debriefing that, while its corporate experience was a strength, its technical proposal did not provide sufficient details regarding its management approach, did not include a proposed schedule, and did not provide an adequate staffing plan. Adelaide challenges the evaluation in this regard.

Our Office reviews challenges to an agency’s technical evaluation to determine whether the agency acted reasonably and in accord with the solicitation’s evaluation criteria and applicable procurement statutes and regulations. Integrate, Inc.,

B-296526, Aug. 4, 2005, 2005 CPD ¶ 154 at 3. Here, we find that the technical evaluation was reasonable.

Adelaide has furnished no basis to question the agency's determination that its management plan lacked adequate detail to evaluate the likelihood of successful performance. In this regard, the RFQ provided as follows:

Management Approach: At a minimum, the offeror should develop a plan showing an understanding of the tasks to be covered and the schedule for the required services. The plan should show how the work will be managed to ensure the success of the contract from a professional, cost and time perspective and should include a staff plan that among other items shows availability of staff and subcontractors to complete multi-tasked jobs.

RFQ at 3.

Adelaide notes that in describing its corporate experience, it listed in its proposal the various tasks performed under four prior VA contracts for asbestos surveys. The solicitation here, however, required vendors to furnish a "plan . . . show[ing] how the work will be managed to ensure the success of the contract." *Id.* Simply listing tasks completed under prior contracts does not describe a plan for successful performance. Likewise, while Adelaide points to a flow chart in its proposal identifying the stages in the required work—"Need Identified and Project Manager Assigned"; "Work Request Received by Environmental Consultant"; "Brewster Office"; "Team/Client Pre-job Briefing and Planning"; "Data Gathered Analyzed"; "Detailed Reporting"—we find reasonable the agency's position that simply identifying a few general stages in the work, without including any narrative describing each stage, did not furnish an adequate basis for the agency to evaluate its management approach. Further, while Adelaide furnished a generic Quality Assurance and Quality Control Manual, the agency reasonably determined that the manual did not constitute a detailed, overall management approach to performing the specific required work under this solicitation. Furthermore, while Adelaide entered in the solicitation schedule a completion date for each VA facility, we disagree with the protester that this shows the agency was unreasonable in downgrading its proposal for lack of a performance schedule. Rather, we find reasonable the agency's position that an overall completion date for each VA facility is not the sort of detailed, task-by-task schedule that was to be furnished under the management approach subfactor and which was necessary in order to evaluate the vendor's likelihood of successful, timely performance.

Regarding the staffing plan, Adelaide notes that it identified in its proposal its president/contract administrator, senior vice president/program manager, director of technical and field operations/field supervisor, and an industrial hygienist. Adelaide Proposal at 9-13. In contrast, however, the awardee identified in its proposal its proposed project manager, assistant project manager, quality manager, a number of

lead industrial hygienists, and a number of industrial hygienists. Furthermore, the awardee also indicated in its proposal its staffing approach for each stage of performance. Aerosol Proposal at 2-3, 7, 14-22. In these circumstances, we conclude that the agency reasonably viewed the protester's staffing approach as less detailed, and less likely to result in successful performance than the awardee's.

Having considered all of Adelaide's challenges to the evaluation, we find that none furnish a basis for questioning the issuance of a task order to Aerosol.

The protest is denied.

Lynn H. Gibson
General Counsel