

CREATING THE NEXT:
DEFENSE INNOVATION CONFERENCE

Preparing Successful Bids and Proposals

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WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO



The Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center (GTPAC) is part of a national network of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC)

- GTPAC is a program under GA Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI²)
- Funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) with State matching funds through Georgia Tech.
- Get acquainted with GTPAC
 - <http://tinyurl.com/welcome-to-gtpac>



BEFORE YOU RESPOND TO A SOLICITATION, YOU NEED TO KNOW...



Key Differences between Bids and Proposals

BIDS

Submitted in response to
“Invitations for Bids” (IFBs)

Awards are made based on
Price and Price-related factors

PROPOSALS

Submitted in response to
“Requests for Proposals” (RFPs)

Awards are made based on
Price and Non-Price factors;
e.g, quality, past performance,
technical expertise are
frequently considered.

What Influences Proposal Selections

- Government's Requirement Is Clearly Defined
- Risk of Unsuccessful Performance Is Minimal

Cost or Price Plays a Dominant Role in Selection of Contractor

**Clear Requirement
+ Low Risk =
Cost Is Dominant**

- Government's Requirement Is Less Well-Defined
- More Development Work Is Required
- Performance Risk is Higher

Technical Factors or Past performance Play a Dominant Role in Selection of Contractor

**Requirement Not Exact
+ High Risk =
Factors Other Than Cost Are Dominant**

Applications of Responsiveness and Responsibility

Universally practiced in government – at federal, state and local levels – are the concepts of responsiveness and responsibility.

A public contract is **not** awarded unless these two requirements are satisfied.

So what do these terms mean?

Meanings of Responsiveness and Responsibility

Responsiveness refers to your offer – your submittal in response to the invitation.

Following instructions.

Responsibility refers to you – your qualifications and ability to perform.

A judgement is made about *your wherewithal to do the work.*

“Responsiveness” in Bids v. Proposals

BIDS

- In a bid, responsiveness is unforgiving.
- If you make a mistake, leave something out, or don't follow the instructions, your bid probably will be rejected.

PROPOSALS

- In a proposal, responsiveness* is still important, but a proposal can be revised to become acceptable if the Government decides to enter into negotiations with you.

Examples of “Responsiveness”

- Offer submitted on time to correct location.
- Pricing information is complete.
- References submitted in accordance with solicitation instructions.
- Offer takes no exceptions to specifications.
- Offer is signed in blue ink.
- Page limitation is obeyed

Examples of “Responsibility”

The Government must make an affirmative determination that you can perform.

- Have adequate financial resources.
- Comply with the delivery requirements.
- Have prior satisfactory performance.
- A good record of integrity and business ethics.
- Adequate management and technical skills.
- Adequate facilities/equipment.
- Otherwise eligible to receive an award.

Different Types of Contracts

- Fixed Price
 - Most common; government prefers.
- Cost
 - Used only when cost can't be fixed.
 - Examples: Cost Reimbursement, Incentive Fee, Time & Material.

The form of pricing expected will be indicated in the solicitation.

Types of Government Solicitations

Sources Sought – A published synopsis to determine interest in a given acquisition. It requests interested parties to submit their capabilities to determine their ability to perform. Often used to determine whether a set-aside to small businesses can be justified.

Presolicitation – Summary of a forthcoming solicitation, not yet ready for a formal bid. Usually issued at least 15 days before the Solicitation. During the pre-solicitation period, vendors normally are at liberty to pose questions and offer suggestions and information.

Types of Government Solicitations

Combined Synopsis/Solicitation – A streamlined solicitation for commercial items which solicits proposals.

Solicitation – An advertised invitation to submit a bid, a quote, or a proposal to fulfill a requirement of the government. Sometimes referred to as an IFB, RFQ or RFP.

Forms of Procurement Solicitations

Request for Quotation (“RFQ”) – Used to determine current market pricing. The quote you submit is not a binding offer, however, it may lead to a contract.

Invitation for Bid (“IFB”) – Agency generally knows what it wants and award is based on price and/or price related factors.

Request for Proposal (“RFP”) – Agency is not certain what it wants and is looking to you to develop a solution and a cost estimate.

Special Process for A&E Services

- Architectural/Engineering services are solicited differently.
- Multi-stage process:
 1. Submit proposals.
 2. Gov't makes "short list" of qualified firms/teams.
 3. Firms/teams interviewed, ranked.
 4. Price is negotiated with firm/team selected #1.

Where do you find RFPs, IFBs, RFQs?

1. Fed. Biz. Opps. (<http://www.fbo.gov/>) (Federal procurements)
2. Georgia Procurement Registry (http://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRSapp/PR_index.jsp) (State and local opportunities in Georgia)
3. GeorgiaBids.Net (<http://www.georgiabids.net/bid-opportunities/>)
4. Local Govt. Websites (Counties, Municipalities, Authorities, School Districts) (Bids / RFP Pages)
5. GTPAC's iSearch Tool (<http://gtpac.org/isearch/>)

Federal Solicitation Format

Federal RFPs utilized the Federal Solicitation Format. This format is often mimicked by State and Local Governments.

Part I - The Schedule (Sections A - H)

Part II - Contract Clauses (Section I)

Part III - Attachments/Exhibits (Section J)

Part IV – Representations, Selection Criteria, and Instructions (Sections K - M)

Federal Solicitation Format

The key sections to pay attention to are Sections C, J, K, L and M.

Section C—Statement of Work

Section J—List of Attachments

Section K—Representations & Certifications

Section L—Instructions for formatting, organizing and submitting your proposal

Section M—Evaluation Criteria

Decode the RFP

After you have reviewed the entire solicitation, focus on the most important components:

1. Statement of Work (“SOW”) - This is normally Section C. You can’t bid on work if you don’t understand the scope of the work and what they are asking you to do.
2. Carefully review the Evaluation Criteria, this is normally Section M.
3. Then read Sections K & L, which will give you an overview of what you need to fill out, and how you have to submit the proposal (the format).

The content of your proposal should be driven in large part by the evaluation Criteria to maximize your score.

Understand How They Will Evaluate

- The evaluation criteria tells you how they will evaluate proposals and the factors they will evaluate and weigh to make a “best value” determination.
- It gives you key insight into the factors the government cares about.
- Read it carefully! These are the specific things they want to see in your proposal. This is how they will score and grade you.

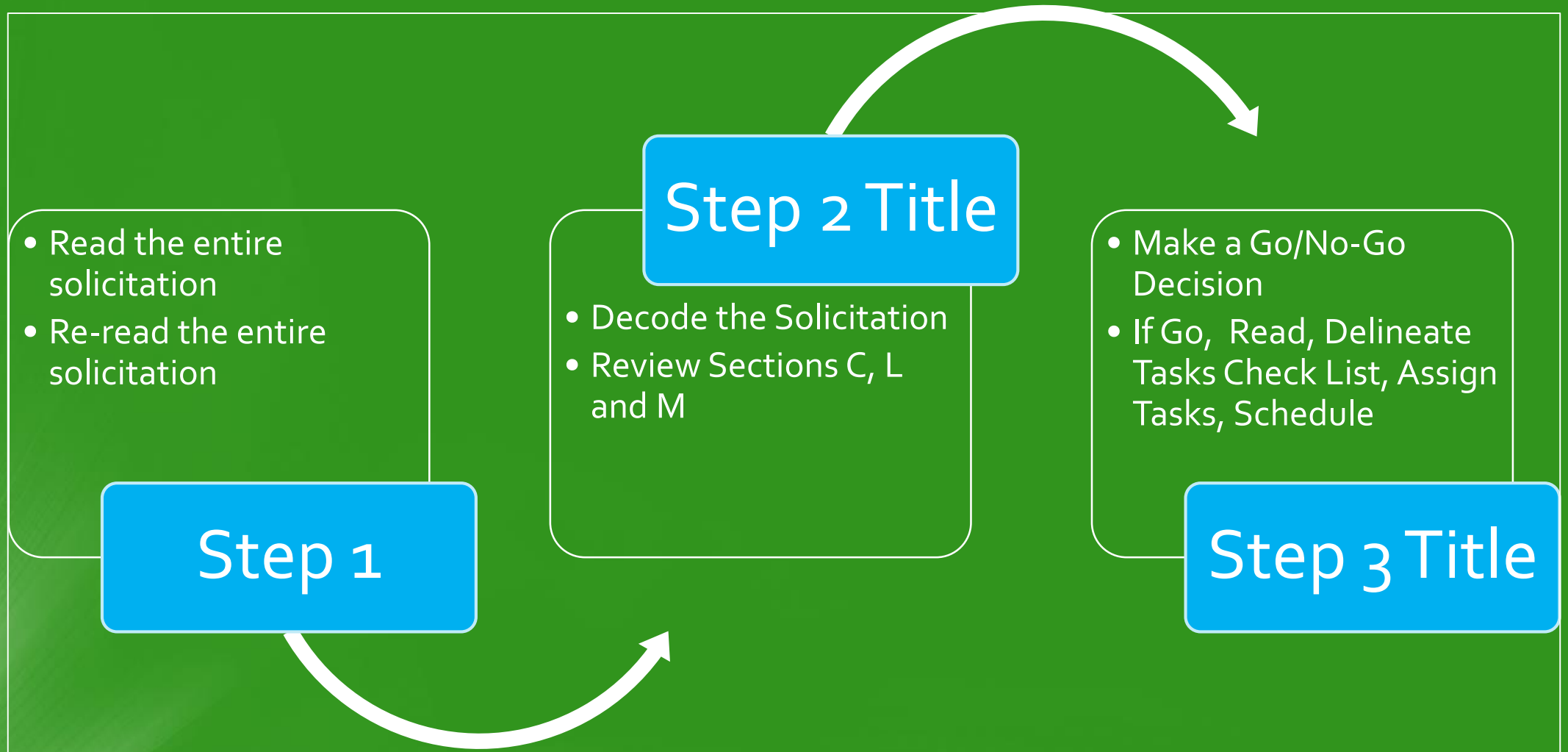
Responding to an RFP?

- While they are often structured similarly, it is important to know that every RFP is unique and how you draft a proposal in response to an RFP is going to be driven by the RFP's instructions.
- Every proposal submitted in response to a government solicitation is different.
- There is no "template" to write a proposal because the content of every proposal is unique just like the content of every book in a library is unique.
- There is , however, a typical proposal format or structure .

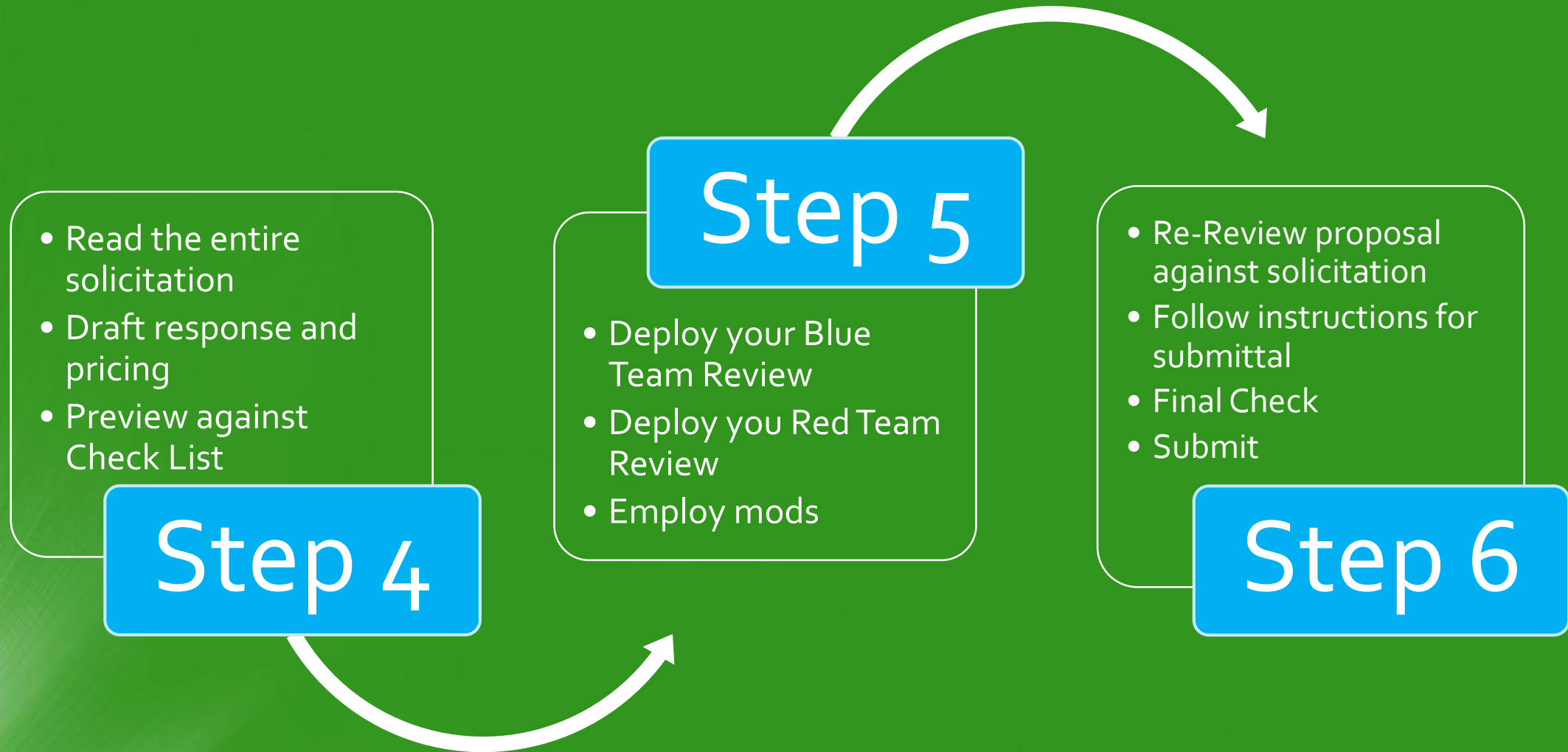
Typical Proposal Structure

1. Cover page.
2. Cover or transmittal letter.
3. Easy to follow table of contents.
4. Executive summary.
5. Numbered sections.
6. Technical component (technical proposal).
7. The evaluation factors.
8. Cost or Price component (cost proposal).
9. Information requests made in the RFP (forms, reps and certs).
10. Conclusion and/or Summary.

Preparing to Write Successful Proposals Work Flow



Preparing to Write Successful Proposals Work Flow



Before You Begin, Determine Your Potential

- Is the opportunity consistent with your business plan?
- Do you have adequate capacity, equipment and personnel?
- Do you have (or can you acquire) sufficient experience?
- Can you beat the competition?
- Is the risk manageable?
- Can you make money?
- Make a “Go / No-Go” decision ...

Go/No-Go Decision Matrix

Proposal Manager _____						Client Name _____						
Office Location _____						Procurement Name _____						
Business Unit _____						Estimated Total Value _____						
Estimated B&P Cost _____						Per Year Value _____						
Go/No Go Decision												
Bid Factors	Bid Factor Scoring Scale										Estimated Score	
	Negative			Neutral			Positive				Our Company	Top Competitor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1. Are you known by the client?	Unknown to this client			Known to client, but not fully cultivated			Well-developed working relationship; previous contracts					
2. Is this the first you heard of procurement?	Did not expect RFP; unprepared			Generally up-to-date; no major negatives			Known 3-12 months; good favorable, confirmed intelligence					
3. What is our overall technical capability/position?	Not qualified; weak relevant experience			Capable; understand problem; experienced			Can meet/exceed every requirement; technically superior					
4. Can we provide proof of qualified staff?	Limited in-house staff available			Good in-house staff available			Best in-house staff available					
5. Are subcontractors needed?	Yes, but will dilute position			Yes, but will have little or no effect			Yes, and will enhance overall proposal					
6. What is the financial potential?	Marginal long term; no short term return			Good long term; questionable short term			Excellent long term; excellent short term					
7. Can we respond with a complete, compelling proposal?	Unclear understanding of problem/project needs; limited response			Understand problems, project & client needs; can respond			Can meet/exceed all requirements; have compelling story; know hot buttons					
8. Who are our competitors?	Competitor is strongly favored or UNKNOWN			Open competition with no strong favorite			We are strongly favored over competition; incumbent					
9. Is project within our geographic region?	Poor geographic presence/experience			Good geographic presence/experience			Strong geographic presence and experience					
10. What is our pricing competitiveness?	Must cut corners; cost share; risky			Reasonable & competitive; reasonable risks			Honest, credible price within known limits; acceptable risks					
Total score of factors evaluated												
Maximum potential score (number of factors evaluated times 10)												
Decision (Total score should be about 75+% of maximum score for a "Go" decision, or better than the top competitor.)											Go	No

Proposal Preparation - SOL # A-07-12345

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Percent Complete	Start Date	End Date	TASK	November						
				27	3	10	17	24		
0%	11/1/07	11/5/07	Read RFP, Prepare Questions	▲	▼					
0%	11/1/07	11/6/07	Submit questions to agency.	▲	▼					
0%	11/2/07	11/4/07	Assign proposal team.	▲	▼					
0%	11/7/07	11/7/07	Attend pre-proposal conference.		▲					
0%	11/3/07	11/26/07	Prepare technical proposal.	▲					▼	
0%	11/10/07	11/26/07	Prepare price proposal.			▲			▼	
0%	11/10/07	11/20/07	Blue team review and feedback.			▲		▼		
0%	11/20/07	11/26/07	Red team scoring and feedback.				▲		▼	
0%	11/20/07	11/26/07	Revisions.				▲		▼	
0%	11/26/07	11/30/07	Final assembly of proposal for delivery.						▲	▼

Structure the Proposal so its Easy for the Evaluator to Read

1. Always have a Table of Contents (“TOC”).
2. Eliminate guesswork by ensuring that each response to information requested in an RFP is carefully and appropriately labeled so the evaluator can easily recognize the sections of the RFP that are being addressed.
3. If the RFP requests certain information, don’t make the reader search to find it. Remember, the easier they can find the information they requested, the easier it is for them to score you and give you points.

Structure the Proposal so its Easy for the Evaluator to Read – Cont'd

Make sure to address the evaluation criteria in an orderly way, for example, regarding the evaluation criteria we just reviewed, you could structure the proposal to address each factor in separate sections:

1. Geographical Location
2. Past Performance
3. Experience (including Technical Capability)
4. Price

Demonstrate in Your Technical Proposal Why Your Firm Can Meet the Government's Need

- ❑ A good proposal articulates how the bidder can solve the problem at an affordable price.
- ❑ Focus on the value of the product and service your company provides first – then mention your certifications.
- ❑ Don't get caught up telling a great story about your company, focus more on telling the government how you will do the specific work that is needed.
- ❑ Tell the reader why your company offers the best solution and is the best fit to perform the work.
- ❑ Clearly demonstrate why your firm can best fulfill the government's need at a price that is fair and reasonable.

Make Sure Your Cost / Price includes Indirect Costs and Profit/Fee

- When estimating costs/price, factor in of course, your direct costs (actual cost of the goods, labor, supplies, equipment) but don't forget your indirect costs to perform (overhead + general and administrative expenses or G&A), this includes management salaries, utilities, insurance, bonding, rent, janitorial, office supplies, transportation, depreciation, legal fees, training, tax issues and liability.
- Also, factor in a reasonable profit or fee.
- $\text{Direct costs} + \text{Indirect costs (overhead+G\&A)} + \text{Profit/fee} = \text{Bid price.}$
- Typical profit on fixed price contract is 5% (large) and 12%-15% (small business), always somewhere between 5%-15%. If cost contract, profit/fee is generally 5% for all firms.

Your Proposal Needs to be Well Written, Visually Interesting, and Error Free

- No spelling or grammar mistakes.
- The government will judge the capabilities of your company by how well the proposal looks.
- Nice cover, full-color, in most cases, graphics-intensive.
- High impact proposals look like desktop published magazines.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the government evaluator.
- If you have a small marketing budget, utilize services such as Vistaprint, Canva, Fiverr.

Avoid Common Mistakes

- Failure to follow instructions.
- Questionable understanding of requirements.
- Incomplete responses—no specifics.
- Noncompliance with specification.
- Technical/price imbalance – you can be too low (shows you don't understand req.)
- Poor proposal organization – not logical.
- Wordiness, but not addressing key factors.
- Failure to show relevance of past performance.
- Unsubstantiated rationale for approaches.
- Restating requirements without explaining how they will be performed.
- Unprofessional appearance, typos, unnumbered pages, smudges, poor grammar, whiteout, etc.

Do Everything You Can to Learn from Your Mistakes

- If you are not selected for award, consider asking the government for a debriefing.
- Shows contracting officers that you are willing to improve.
- Learn from your mistakes; don't repeat them.

Learn from Others

You can find some example proposals here:

<https://uahtechcomm.com/proposal-database/>

While these proposals will give you a general idea regarding what a proposal should look like, please use them as only a general reference rather than as a specific guide for how to draft your next proposal.

The format of your next proposal should always be driven by the specific solicitation at issue, its requirements, and what it is specifically asking for and evaluating you on.

Understand that Proposal Writing Takes Time and is Hard Work

- There are no shortcuts to writing a winning proposal.
- Like writing anything, it takes time, effort and energy.
- Understand that a good proposal may take days, weeks or even months of effort depending on the procurement opportunity.
- Know your potential government client, their requirements and critical success factors.



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