

**I/ITSEC Presentation to Industry  
"Unraveling the Mystery of the PEO STRI Source Selection Process"  
PCO Panel Discussion: Q&A Session  
Tuesday, 29 Nov 2011, 4:00-5:30**

Q1: When is the award decision made? Is it made before Congressional notification?

A1: The SSA chooses the successful offeror after being briefed by the Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) (or Source Selection Advisory Council [SSAC]). All written documentation is then reviewed by legal and the Contract Review Board (CRB) peer review. After concurrence of the peer review, Congressional notification is made.

Q2: Should we include other information when responding to a Request for Information (RFI) or address only the specific instructions?

A2: You should especially address the specific areas listed in the RFI and any teaming arrangement you intend to use to meet it. Also include information the Government may have overlooked or additional information that may assist the Government in the market research analysis and determination of the acquisition strategy. If page limitations are a concern or you have questions about the RFI, contact the Contracting Officer.

For RFIs issued as part of a multiphase approach, such as those permitted under STOC II, wherein responses may be evaluated for inclusion into the next phase, you should only answer the specific questions. You may still contact the Contracting Officer if you have questions or concerns.

Q2: If a company can only perform 50% of the requirements in an RFI or Sources Sought Notice (SSN), should they respond?

A2: Yes, respond to the RFI or SS and address any possible teaming arrangements as well. Doing so will help us determine our acquisition strategy and may provide you more opportunity to compete. Depending on the responses received from our market research it may benefit the Government to conduct a separate competition for a specific component. It's also advisable to contact the contracting officer or POC if there is anything in the RFI or SSN you don't understand.

Q3: What is a strength?

A3: The RFP will provide the definition, which should mirror that of the DoD Source Selection Procedures (July 2011). Strengths and weaknesses must include the benefit/impact to the Government. To determine whether an aspect of the proposal warrants a strength or weakness, evaluators first review the proposed approach or feature against the specific evaluation criteria. Then the quality and/or degree of the proposed approach or feature is measured against the definition and the overall impact to contract performance. Individual evaluations are then reviewed by the PCO and Legal to make sure they can be tied back to Sections L and M.

Q4: How do you constitute the evaluators?

A4: There is not a stand-alone evaluation team. The PM has a cross functional team that is chaired by the PCO for the program. We use both internal Government evaluators and outside evaluators or professionals, depending on the complexity of the requirement. For instance, we may include the user (soldier) or Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from NASA, the FAA, etc.

Q5: Are DD254s only used when the program has identified security requirements? Can they be added later?

A5: If the program is "Classified" or higher, it has to have a DD254. A basic IDIQ may not have a DD254, but you could have one at the delivery order level.

Q6: If you need a facility clearance, can you request it after award?

A6: It depends on how fast the work must commence. The RFP should include information on whether it is required at time of award or within a certain amount of time after award. If permitted after award, explain in your proposal how you will obtain the clearance in a timely manner.

Q7: Can the subcontractor have the security clearance?

A7: No, not in lieu of the prime. Since privity of contract is between the Government and the prime, the Government does not sponsor the subcontractor. The prime must have the appropriate security clearance required by the DD254. The subcontractor must also be listed on the DD254 if access to the facility is required in performance. Each DD254 is specific to each contract or task order.

Q8: Can we get Sections L and M earlier? Why does legal have to review it?

A8: PEO STRI continually strives to inform industry of requirements and provide the relevant documentation at the earliest time practicable. However, in order for the Government and industry to gain maximum benefits from the use of draft RFPs, the requirements must be somewhat concrete in order to develop sections B, L, and M). Then industry can provide comments to help us refine requirements further without the risk of significant changes to the requirements or acquisition strategy later in the final RFP. To help achieve this balance draft RFPs are reviewed by legal.

Q9: How do you guard against biases in an evaluation? How do you ensure evaluators evaluate fairly?

A9: The evaluators independently evaluate the proposals, then they discuss together as a team and reach a consensus. If there is dissenting view, it will come out in that consensus discussion. Additionally, there is quite a bit of oversight in our processes. The PCO is not an evaluator, but is responsible for the overall management and integrity of the Source Selection (SS). Therefore, the evaluation report and evaluator worksheets are reviewed and/or approved by the PCO. This review is followed by a legal review and finally a review by the SSA, if other than the PCO. Additionally, every SSEB member receives SS training which includes evaluation and procurement integrity. The internal peer review process also brings in an independent team. And finally, once the evaluators are finished, they are not done. We insist on this being a fair process. We look at every single strength and every single weakness and make sure

the evaluators applied it equally. Evaluation is a tedious process and there are a lot of checks and balances, which is why the process takes so long behind the scenes.

Q10: Do you have any metrics to determine if your SS process has improved over the past two years?

A10: As the SSAT was established at the end of May 2011, we are currently developing metrics which measures the source selection process specifically. The procurement schedule and the number of protests sustained/overruled are two factors under consideration. Since there are many factors that contribute to or influence the source selection process it is difficult to isolate a single factor that provides a direct correlation.

Q: Can you provide industry some lessons learned so we can learn from each others' experiences?

A: We may try to do something like that in the future. Currently, we are giving you feedback in your debriefs, so be sure to take advantage of that opportunity.