

DIA SOURCE SELECTION DESKBOOK



Version 1.1

July 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 Introduction	5
CHAPTER 2 Getting Started	6
Procurement integrity and ethics	6
Overview	6
Components of the SSO	7
Administrative support considerations	8
Market research	8
Determining the source selection approach	9
CHAPTER 3 The Source Selection Plan	10
CHAPTER 4 Evaluation Factors and Subfactors	11
Overview	11
Mandatory evaluation considerations	11
Weighing factors and subfactors	14
Rating scales	14
Applicability to “go-no go” and “meets minimum requirement” evaluation factors	16
Applicability to price evaluation	16
Evaluation standards	16
Accompanying narratives	17
CHAPTER 5 Drafting the Source Selection Plan	18
CHAPTER 6 The Solicitation	19
Introduction	19
Common problems with the solicitation process	19
Proposal submission information	20
CHAPTER 7 Evaluation Process	21
Overview	21
Evaluation steps	21
Past performance evaluations	23
Price evaluations	23
The independent government cost estimate (IGCE)	23
CHAPTER 8 Exchanges with Offerors	25
Overview	25
Types of exchanges	25

CHAPTER 9 Selection and Award	29
Overview	29
Tradeoff analysis	29
Documenting the proposal comparison	29
Source selection decision	30
Documenting the source selection decision	31
Awarding the contract(s)	31
CHAPTER 10 Notification to Unsuccessful Offerors	32
CHAPTER 11 Debriefing Offerors	33
Overview	33
Purposes of debriefing	33
Pre-award vs. post-award debriefings	33
Notification of debriefing	35
Debriefings methods and locations	35
Attendees	35
Preparing for a debriefing	36
General outline for debriefings	36
Handling questions	36
Other information to ensure a meaningful debriefing	36
The Post-debriefing Memorandum	37

LIST OF FIGURES

2-1 SSO Responsibilities	6
2-2 Typical SSO	7
2-3 Examples of Market Research Techniques	9
4-1 Sample “Color Code” Rating Table	15
8-1 Items for Discussion	27
9-1 Steps in Performing Tradeoff Analysis	29
9-2 Sample Comparative Analysis Report Format	30
9-3 Source Selection Decision Criteria	30
10-1 Comparison of Pre-award and Post-award Notices	32
11-1 Comparison of Pre-award and Post-award Debriefings	34
D-1 Sample Interview Questions and Topics	46
D-2 Assessment Elements	47
D-3 Assessment Ratings	48
D-5 Sample Past Performance Survey Questionnaire	49-50

LSIT OF APPENDICIES

A. Security Considerations	38
B. Personnel Considerations	40
C. Using Current and Past Performance as a Source Selection Factor	41
D. Past Performance Interviews	46
E. Oral Presentations	51
F. Cost Realism Analysis	55
G. Online Reverse Auctions	56
H. Definitions	58
I. Marking “Source Selection Sensitive” Documents	62
J. Basic Source Selection Process	64
K. Proposal Evaluation Procedures	67

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This deskbook contains information on source selection processes and techniques for use in competitive, negotiated acquisitions. Source selection is a process in which requirements, facts, recommendations, and policy relevant to an award decision are examined to award a contract in the way that makes the best sense. Source selection ranges from a simplified process of finding the lowest priced item or service to a structured process using the trade-off processes to select the best value to the taxpayer.

This deskbook provides the format and guidance for writing a source selection plan (SSP). The SSP has two parts. The first part describes the source selection organization (SSO) and its responsibilities. The second part identifies the requirement, the evaluation criteria, and detailed procedures for evaluating the proposal. The source selection authority (SSA) must approve the SSP prior to solicitation release.

The government's objective for all purchases is to obtain the right item or service at the right time, from the right source, at the right price. This is the definition of "best value" in its broadest sense. Addressing the unique circumstances of each acquisition, choosing a contracting method, and the awarding the contract are elements of this process. The deskbook is targeted for all individuals involved in any capacity of a source selection process.

The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS), and Defense Intelligence Agency Regulation Supplement and Instruction (DARSI) govern the acquisition process within DIA.

The FAR is available on line at <http://www.arnet.gov/far/>

The DFARS is available on line at <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dp/dars/dfars.html>

The DARSI is available from (b)(3):10 USC
424

In the event of conflicting guidance between this document and the FAR or DFARS, the later two control.

A graphic representation of the source selection process is at appendix K.

CHAPTER 2 -- GETTING STARTED

1. **Procurement integrity and ethics.** The procurement integrity principle requires that all offerors receive fair treatment and that no offeror be provided an unfair advantage. Personnel involved in a source selection are subject to the Procurement Integrity Act (FAR 3.104). This Act and other similar statutes and regulations impose stringent requirements related to safeguarding source selection information and other integrity issues. All participants involved in the source selection process must adhere to these stringent requirements and sign nondisclosure statements. This includes technical and contracting personnel, and any contractors supporting the acquisition. Procurement integrity rules provide for both *civil and criminal penalties* for violations.

Personnel participating personally and substantially in a source selection cannot have financial interest in the process. At the earliest stage of the acquisition, the contracting officer identifies the participating individuals. These individuals must file an OGE Form 450, Confidential Financial Disclosure Report. The Office of General Counsel reviews these forms for potential or actual conflicts of interest. If a conflict of interest is identified, action must be taken to eliminate or mitigate it. See Appendix A for safeguards to ensure the integrity of the source selection. Classified source selection documents must also be marked and protected as required.

2. **Overview.** The acquisition team, a team of functional members or stakeholders, begins with the Acquisition Plan (AP). The AP is the earliest planning stage. The acquisition (AM) or program manager (PM) and technical representatives develop a work statement or statement of objectives. Then members (contracting, AM/PM, other technical representatives, legal counsel, potential evaluation team members e.g., pricing, DCAA, DCMA, and user organizations) complete the SSP.

The Source Selection Organization (SSO) normally consists of the Source Selection Authority (SSA) who makes the contract selection, an optional Source Selection Advisory Council (SSAC) that acts as advisors to the SSA, and a Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) that evaluates offers received. When the SSO operates without a SSAC, the SSEB performs the functions of a SSAC.

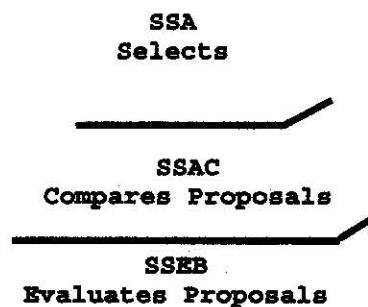


Figure 2-1:
SSO Responsibilities

3. Components of the SSO.

The contracting officer normally serves as the SSA in procurements of less than \$10M. When not serving as the SSA, the contracting officer normally serves as a business advisor to the SSO.

The contracting officer plays a major role in any source selection. The contracting officer serves as the focal point for inquiries from industry, controls all exchanges with offerors, and executes the contract award. Additionally, small business advisors, technical experts, and non-government sources may serve as SSO advisors. Figure 2-2 illustrates the typical SSO.

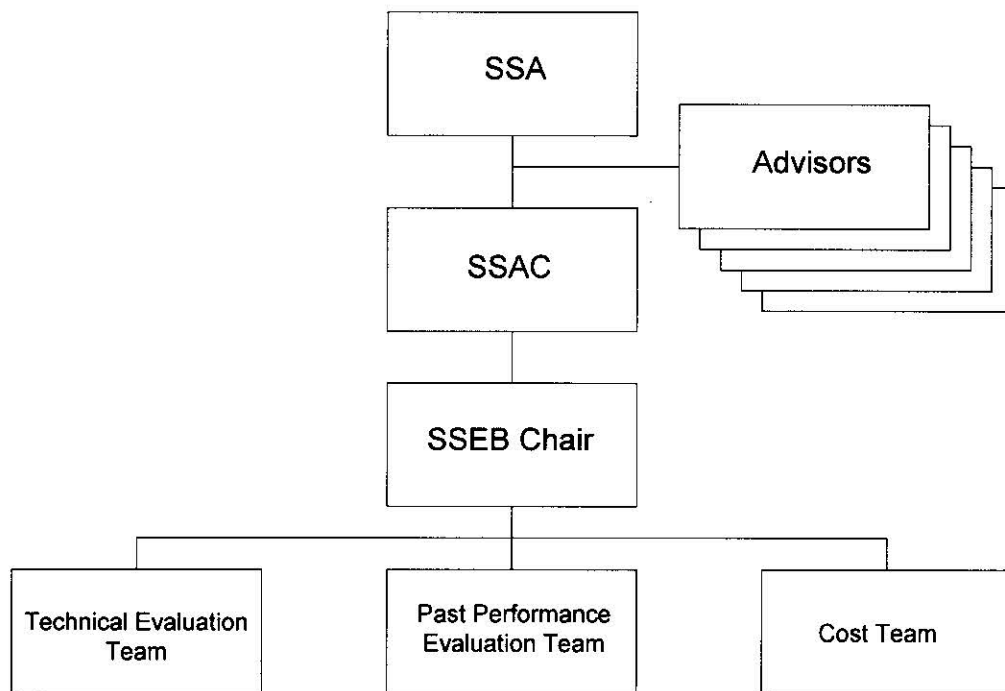


Figure 2-2. Typical SSO

Multiple groups of evaluators comprise the SSEB and are responsible for evaluating specific areas of the proposal against the solicitation requirements.

Senior-level advisors comprise the SSAC and are the link between the SSEB and the SSA.

The skills, expertise, and experience of the people assigned to source selections are the key to success.

The SSA selects the contractor(s) and approach(es) that provides the best value to the government. The SSA must be at a level that is fully accountable for the results of the decision and knows what factors determine the best value. The contracting officer normally serves as the SSA in procurements of at or less than \$10M. The VACA division chief or deputy is designated the SSA for all procurements greater than \$10M and at or less than \$100M. The HCA or deputy is designated the SSA for all procurements greater than \$100M. The HCA may appoint any agency employee to serve as the SSA. Likewise, senior management may choose to participate as an SSA at any level on a case by case basis. The SSA must approve the source selection plan (SSP) before the RFP is released.

When not serving as the SSA, the contracting officer normally serves as a business advisor to the source selection organization (SSO). The contracting officer serves as the focal point for inquiries from industry, controls all exchanges with offerors, and executes the contract award. Additionally, small business advisors, technical experts, and nongovernmental sources may serve as SSO advisors. Everyone one assigned to the source selection organization shall sign a Source Selection Non Disclosure.

The size and composition of the SSO varies depending on the requirement of each acquisition. Whether the team is large or small, structure it to ensure teamwork, unity of purpose, and appropriate open communication among the team members throughout the process. This facilitates a comprehensive evaluation and selection of the proposal that offers the best value to the agency and the taxpayer.

4. Administrative support considerations. A successful source selection requires careful planning of the administrative support to the SSO. Each acquisition varies in terms of the administrative support requirements. Adequate facilities, security controls, secure storage space for proposals and work materials, appropriate computer hardware and software with related support, adequate telephones, facsimile machines, and office supplies are some important requirements common to most acquisitions.

5. Market research. An essential part of designing every acquisition strategy is market research. See FAR Part 10. It should be the *first step in any acquisition*. Use market research to obtain information on products and services available in the commercial marketplace to determine if a need may be met by a commercial item or service, and to identify commercial practices associated with such items or services. Market research is the key to choosing the appropriate evaluation factors, contracting method, and the amount and type of information to be included in proposals. Figure 2-3 provides some examples of market research techniques.

- Use general sources of information available from the market place, government sources, and the Internet
- Contact knowledgeable individuals regarding market capabilities and business practices
- Review the results of recent market research
- Publish formal requests for information
- Hold pre-solicitation conferences
- Participate in interactive on-line communication
- Review catalogs and product literature.

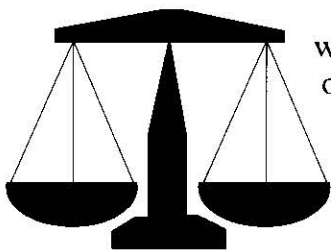
Figure 2-3: Examples of Market Research Techniques

6. Determining the source selection approach.



One of the early steps to designing an acquisition strategy is to determine the most effective evaluation methodology. For most acquisitions, the tradeoff process is most effective and results in the best value to the government. Use this process when it is in the government's best interest to consider awarding to the offeror with the lowest price. The SSA selects the successful offeror(s) by considering the tradeoffs and applying good

business judgment to determine the proposal that represents the best value.



a. Best value tradeoff approach. A tradeoff process is appropriate when it may be in the best interest of the Government to consider award to other than the lowest priced offeror or other than the highest technically rated offeror. When using a tradeoff process, the following apply: (1) All evaluation factors and significant subfactors that will affect contract award and their relative importance shall be clearly stated in the solicitation; and (2) The solicitation shall state whether all evaluation factors other than cost or price, when combined, are significantly more important than, approximately equal to, or significantly less important than cost or price.

This process permits tradeoffs among cost or price and non-cost factors and allows the Government to accept other than the lowest priced proposal. The perceived benefits of the higher priced proposal shall merit the additional cost, and the rationale for tradeoffs must be documented in the file in accordance with FAR 15.406.

b. Lowest price-technically acceptable (LPTA) approach. The lowest price technically acceptable source selection process is appropriate when best value is expected to result from selection of the technically acceptable proposal with the lowest evaluated price.

When using the lowest price technically acceptable process, the following apply: (1) the evaluation factors and significant subfactors that establish the requirements of acceptability shall be set forth in the solicitation. Solicitations shall specify that award will be made on the basis of the lowest evaluated price of proposals meeting or exceeding the acceptability standards for non-cost factors; (2) tradeoffs are not permitted; and (3) proposals are evaluated for acceptability but not ranked using the non-cost/price factors.

CHAPTER 3 THE SOURCE SELECTION PLAN

1. **Purpose.** The source selection plan (SSP) is a vital planning document that describes the proposal evaluation process and selection of the winning offeror(s).

2. **Format.** DIA uses a standard format for the SSP. A template is provided on the AE Web page at Use prudent business judgment to tailor the size and detail of the SSP based on the complexity of the acquisition. As a minimum, the SSP will include:

- A description of the requirement
- A description of the SSO, including the duties and responsibilities of each of the key elements
- Planned pre-solicitation activities
- The proposed strategy, including explanation of the contract type and whether multiple awards are anticipated
- The proposed evaluation factors and subfactors, their relative importance, and associated standards
- The proposed evaluation methodology

3. **Accessing the plan.** The plan is source selection information as defined in the FAR Part 3. Do not disclose source selection information to any person not authorized to receive the information. Generally, only the SSO members and personnel from the responsible contracting activity with a need to know are authorized to access the plan. All documents and email exchanges must be identified as source selection sensitive. See appendix I for marking guidelines.

The evaluation factors and significant subfactors become public knowledge as they become part of the solicitation. The contracting officer includes the evaluation factors and subfactors in Section M of the solicitation exactly as they appear in the SSP.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION FACTORS AND SUB-FACTORS, WEIGHTS, RATING SCALES AND STANDARDS

1. **Overview.** Base the award decision on evaluation factors and subfactors tailored to the acquisition. The evaluation factors and subfactors represent the key areas of importance to the government, those areas the offeror(s) must emphasize in the preparation of proposals, and the basis of the source selection decision. Evaluation factors provide the basis for meaningful comparison and discrimination among proposals.

Steps in Developing Evaluation Factors and Subfactors:

- Conduct market research and identify the probable universe of offerors
- Brainstorm critical factors and subfactors
- Identify key discriminators likely to surface in the most advantageous proposals
- Define the discriminators as evaluation factors and subfactors
- Obtain SSA approval of the list of factors and subfactors prior to finalizing the SSP and issuing the solicitation
- When using a draft solicitation, clearly inform offerors of the factors and subfactors and their relative importance
- Assess feedback during pre-solicitation exchanges to determine if the choices are correct
- As necessary, revise the factors and subfactors before issuing the solicitation
- After issuing the solicitation, do not change the factors and subfactors without obtaining the SSA's approval and amending the solicitation and SSP

2. **Mandatory evaluation considerations.** Ensure that the SSP and solicitation clearly state all the evaluation factors and subfactors and their relative importance. Offerors need to understand how their proposals will be evaluated so they can better prepare their proposals and decide how to respond to the solicitation.

Technical representatives from the program office should work closely with the contracting officer in developing the SSP and determining the evaluation factors and subfactors based on user requirements, acquisition objectives, perceived risks, and thorough market research. The team must select only those factors that will differentiate proposals. Limit the factors and subfactors to those areas expected to reveal measurable differences or risk levels among the proposals. Do not include factors for which the government cannot objectively demonstrate relevance—for which the government is indifferent, e.g., if early delivery would result in no benefit to the government, then delivery prior to the required delivery date should not be identified as a factor or at least ranked low in relative importance and only used to discriminate between proposals that are *identical* in all more important factors.

Develop specific technical factors for each acquisition, taking into consideration the objectives and requirements of the acquisition. These factors are the discriminators most likely to reveal substantive differences in technical approaches or risk levels among competing proposals. However, too many factors and subfactors may lead to a leveling of ratings. Strive to

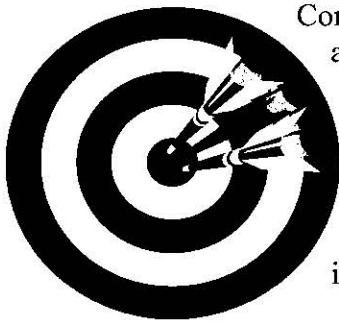
select a limited number of evaluation factors and subfactors, *since more is not necessarily better* and extends the evaluation process.

Choose an evaluation factor only if the requirements warrant a comparative evaluation of that area. One way to assess a potential evaluation factor is to ask, “Will superiority in this factor provide value to the government and is the government willing to possibly pay more for that superiority?”

a. **Cost Factors.** The *Competition in Contracting Act*, as implemented in the FAR, requires that price be included as an evaluation factor in every source selection. The SSP and solicitation must both reflect the relative importance of the evaluation factors. The FAR requires that the solicitation state, as a minimum, whether all evaluation factors other than price, when combined, are:

- Significantly more important than cost or price
- Approximately equal to cost or price
- Significantly less important than cost or price

Cost realism plays an important role in many source selections. Cost realism analysis is the process of independently reviewing and evaluating specific elements of each offeror’s proposed 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 technical proposal. It is very important that Section L specify the information to be evaluated.



Consider cost realism when a cost reimbursement type contract is anticipated. Under a cost type contract, the proposed cost estimates may not be valid indicators of actual final costs to the government. A cost realism analysis is performed and used to determine the most probable cost of performance for each offeror. Selection decisions should be based on the most probable cost estimate. Significant differences between proposed and most probable costs may indicate increased performance risks.

Cost realism may be considered for fixed price incentive contracts or in exceptional cases, for other fixed price type contracts. However, proposed fixed prices are not adjusted for cost realism during the evaluation. Cost realism may be useful in determining if any proposed prices are unrealistically high or low which would indicate that the offeror’s effort to lock in future contracts with a “buy in” or that the offeror does not understand the requirement. The lack of understanding may be a significant risk to performance. One method used to deal with the lack of cost realism is to assign an increased risk rating.

When offerors are not required to bid on every task area, cost evaluations may be determined as a variance from the independent government cost estimate. The solicitation must clearly state which costs will be evaluated and how the cost factor will be assessed.

b. **Past performance.** Past performance is not the same as contractor experience. How a contractor performed on previous contracts must be included as an evaluation factor in competitively negotiated acquisitions for each acquisition in excess of \$1,000,000* for services and information technology (*see DARS Reference ‘Guide to Contractor Performance Information’ for the latest categories and thresholds), unless the contracting officer documents the contract file why it would not be appropriate for that acquisition.

A thorough evaluation of past performance, to include information that is not submitted in proposals, ensures that awards are made to good performers rather than to just good proposal writers. Mandatory elements for past performance include:

- **Quality of product or service** - Assess the contractor’s conformance to contract requirements, specifications, and standards of good workmanship (e.g., commonly accepted technical, professional, environmental, or safety and health standards)
- **Schedule** - Assess the timeliness of the contractor in completing the contract, task orders, milestones, delivery schedules, administrative requirements (e.g., efforts that contribute to or effect the schedule variance)
- **Cost Control** - Assess the contractor’s effectiveness in forecasting, managing, and controlling contract cost—not required for firm fixed price or firm fixed price with economic price adjustment contracts
- **Business Relations** - Assess the integration and coordination of all activities needed to execute the contract, specifically the timeliness, completeness and quality of problem identification, corrective action plans, proposal submittals, the contractor’s history of reasonable and cooperative behavior, customer satisfaction, timely award and management of subcontracts, and whether the contractor met small/small disadvantaged and women-owned business participation goals
- **Management of Key Personnel** - Assess the contractor’s performance in selecting, retaining, supporting, and replacing key personnel when necessary—only for services and information technology business sectors.

c. **Quality.** The FAR requires that the quality of the product or service be addressed in every source selection through consideration of one or more non-cost evaluation factors. In addition to the requirement to address past performance, other non-cost evaluations factors include compliance with solicitation requirements, technical excellence, management capability, and prior experience.

d. **Small Disadvantaged Businesses.** The extent of participation of small disadvantaged business concerns in performance of the contract shall be evaluated in unrestricted acquisitions expected to exceed \$550,000 (\$1,000,000 for construction) subject to certain limitations in FAR Subpart 19.1202-2.

e. **Bundling.** For solicitations involving bundling that offer a significant opportunity for subcontracting, the contracting officer must include a factor to evaluate past performance indicating the extent to which the offeror attained applicable goals for small business participation under contracts that required subcontracting plans. See *FAR Subparts 7.1, 10.001, 19.000, and 19.2* for additional guidance.

3. **Weighting the factors and subfactors.** Avoid using numerical weighting (i.e., assigning points or percentages to evaluation factors and subfactors) for expressing the relative importance of evaluation factors. Evaluation factors and subfactors must be definable in readily understood qualitative terms, e.g., color-coding, and represent the key areas of importance to be considered in the source selection process. The key is the consistency with which the selected method is applied to all competing proposals and the adequacy of the narrative used to support the ratings.

Use priority statements to express the relative importance of the evaluation factors and subfactors. Priority statements relate one evaluation factor or subfactor to each of the other evaluation factors or subfactors.

4. **Rating scales.** When using the tradeoff process, evaluate the non-cost portions of the proposal, associated performance, and proposal risks using a rating scale. This scale must be included in the SSP. The success of an evaluation is not so dependent upon the type of scale used, but rather the consistency with which the evaluators use it. For this reason, the scale must include definitions for each rating to provide the evaluators with a common understanding of how to apply them.

a. **Proposal merit rating scales.** Develop rating scales for the evaluators to use in assessing the merit of the proposals in respect to the evaluation factors and subfactors. Figure 4-1 is an example of a rating scale.

Color	Technical Capability	Strengths	Weaknesses	Past Performance
Blue	The proposal exceeds requirements and clearly demonstrates the offeror's capability to deliver exceptional performance.	There are numerous strengths that are of direct benefit to the government.	Weaknesses are considered insignificant and have no apparent impact to the program.	Highly relevant/very recent past performance in all identified past performance efforts. Excellent performance ratings.
Green	The proposal is satisfactory; the offeror is capable of meeting performance requirements.	Some strengths exist that are of benefit to the Government. The strengths clearly offset weaknesses.	A few weaknesses exist; they are correctable with minimal government oversight or direction.	Relevant/somewhat recent past performance in all identified past performance efforts. Acceptable performance ratings.
Yellow	The proposal is minimally adequate. The offeror is most likely able to meet performance requirements.	A few strengths exist that are of benefit to the government. The strengths do not offset the weaknesses.	Substantial weaknesses exist that may impact the program. They are correctable with some government oversight and direction.	Somewhat relevant/not very recent past performance. Mostly acceptable performance ratings.
Orange	The proposal is inadequate. It is doubtful whether the offeror can meet performance requirements.	Little, if any, strengths exist that are of benefit to the government. The weaknesses clearly offset the strengths.	Weaknesses exist that adversely impact the program. They are only correctable with significant government oversight and direction.	Little relevant past performance identified. Mostly unacceptable performance ratings.
Red	The proposal is highly inadequate; the offeror cannot meet performance requirements.	There are no beneficial strengths.	Numerous weaknesses exist that are so significant that a proposal re-write is not feasible within a suitable timeframe.	Little relevant past performance identified. Almost all performance ratings are unacceptable.
White	Not used	Not used	Not used	Completely lacks relevant performance history or past performance is unavailable, not due offeror's failure to provide information.

Figure 4-1: Sample "Color Code" Rating Table

Both the government and contractor want to keep risk at a level that is appropriate and acceptable for the given acquisition. There are two types of non-cost risks: performance risk and proposal risk.

b. **Performance risk rating scales.** Performance risk analysis provides insight into an offeror's probability of successfully completing the solicitation requirements based on the offeror's performance record on similar contract efforts. Assess risk through evaluation of the offeror's past performance.

c. **Proposal risk rating scales.** Evaluators assess and document the risks associated with an offeror's proposed approach.

5. **Applicability to “go-no go” and “meets minimum requirement” evaluation factor.** When using the tradeoff process, the government may elect to evaluate one or more of the factors on a “go-no go” or “meets minimum requirement” basis.

a. **“Go-no go” evaluation factors are pass-fail evaluation factors.** A proposal must either satisfy the evaluation factor or be ineligible for contract award.

b. **“Meets minimum requirement” evaluation factors.** These factors establish a minimum rating that a proposal must receive. If the proposal does not receive this rating, it is ineligible for contract award. Unlike “go-no go” evaluation factors, a rating scale must be established for this type of evaluation factor. The difference between minimum required evaluation factors and the “go-no go” evaluation factors is that a proposal can receive credit for exceeding the minimum required threshold. For example, assume the minimum required threshold is a “good” rating. If a proposal receives an “unacceptable” rating, it will be ineligible for award. If it receives a good rating, it is eligible for award, but receives no additional credit. If it receives an “excellent” rating, it is eligible for award and will receive additional credit. Use caution when deciding to use a “go-no go” or “meets minimum requirement” evaluation factor. Use of such a factor may result in an otherwise advantageous proposal being excluded from the competition if it fails to meet or satisfy one of these factors or the minimum threshold.

6. **Applicability to price evaluation.** Rating scales are not appropriate for price evaluations. Use a risk factor associated with the contractor's ability to perform at the proposed cost or price. For cost-type contracts, use cost realism based on the contractor's proposal for tradeoffs between cost and other factors in determining best value. The independent government cost estimate may be used as a comparative measure when assessing cost realism.

7. **Evaluation Standards.** Evaluators must be able to determine the relative merit of each proposal with respect to the evaluation factors. Evaluation standards provide guides to help evaluators measure how well a proposal addresses each factor and subfactor. Standards permit the evaluation of each proposal against a uniform objective baseline. Standards also promote consistency in the evaluation by ensuring that the evaluators evaluate each proposal against the same baseline:

- Develop standards concurrent to evaluation factors and subfactor.
- Develop a narrative for each standard that specifies a target performance level that the proposal must achieve to meet the requirements of the factor or subfactor and the solicitation requirements.
- Develop guidelines for higher or lower ratings compared to the target standard.

Avoid the use of overly general standards as it makes consensus among evaluators more difficult to obtain and may obscure the differences between proposals.

Define a standard so that mere inclusion of a topic in an offeror's proposal does not result in a determination that the proposal meets the standard. Use either quantitative standards or qualitative standards in source selections. The standards, as part of the source selection methodology, are part of the source selection plan. As an example, if the evaluation factor states:

“The offeror's software modification approach will be evaluated relative to the modified software's ability to accommodate open architecture, tracking accuracy, and reliability.”

Then the evaluation standard would state:

“The standard is met if (1) the offeror's approach is sound, reflects understanding of the system specification and solicitation requirements, and (2) the modified software meets a certain cited level or higher.”

8. Accompanying narratives. Use narratives in conjunction with a rating system to indicate a proposal's strengths, weaknesses, and risks. Ratings must be supported with narrative statements. Narrative statements describe the proposal's relative strengths, weaknesses, and risks to the SSA in a way that ratings alone cannot. A narrative is required when applying evaluation standards, when comparing proposals, and when conducting a cost or technical tradeoff. The narrative provides a reasonable and rational basis for the selection decision.

CHAPTER 5

DRAFTING THE SOURCE SELECTION PLAN

Vital to any source selection process is a thorough plan to select the best value. Tailor the plan to reflect the complexity of each acquisition. The plan requires the SSA's approval prior to solicitation release.



The SSP contains source selection sensitive information that must be marked and treated in accordance with FAR Part 3 and must not be released outside the source selection organization.

The Source selection plan (SSP). Common sections to the SSP include:

- **Introduction:** Contains a brief description of the acquisition
- **Source selection organization (SSO):** Includes representatives from appropriate functional areas such as contracting, technical, legal counsel, program management, user organizations, the SSAC members, SSEB members, and any other participating boards or workgroups
- **Proposed pre-solicitation activities:** Contains a description of the activities preceding the release of the solicitation, to include market surveys, acquisition strategy meetings, acquisition plan, draft solicitations, synopsis, and solicitation review panels
- **Evaluation procedures:** Includes descriptions of how proposals will be evaluated and rated including how dissenting evaluator views are documented and dealt with, a description of the independent government cost estimate development to include any cost drivers, and a description of how those cost drivers will be evaluated
- **Evaluation factors:** Include a description of the proposed evaluation factors and subfactors, their relative importance, and associated evaluation standards; a description of the evaluation process to be used (i.e., lowest price technically acceptable, tradeoff, or hybrid), oral presentations, and rating system. If cost realism is a requirement, develop an outline of the government's process for formulating the best estimate of the total cost. Separately identify items that could have a sufficient cost impact to warrant special consideration, and identify items that represent non-quantifiable cost risks. Include the proposed independent cost analysis (ICA), most probable cost (MPC), and lifecycle cost (LCC) estimates. State the importance ranking of price to other factors
- **Acquisition Strategy:** Includes the proposed contract type and contemplated incentives and disincentives

CHAPTER 6 THE SOLICITATION

1. **Introduction.** The success of an acquisition is directly related to the quality of the solicitation. A well-written solicitation facilitates a fair competition, preserves the offeror's flexibility to propose innovative solutions, conveys a clear understanding of the government's requirements, and identifies the areas where the offerors can make technical and cost tradeoffs in the proposals. All parts of the solicitation must work together to communicate the government's requirements. The solicitation provides all the information the offeror needs to understand the requirement.

2. **Common problems with the solicitation process:**

- **Inconsistency between the solicitation and the SSP.** Ensure consistency between the SSP and the solicitation
- **Inconsistency within the solicitation.** Conflicts between the descriptions of the government's requirements, instructions on how to prepare a proposal, and information related to the evaluation factors and subfactors are common troublesome areas. This inconsistency may be caused by different groups of people developing the different solicitation sections without proper coordination. Such inconsistencies may result in less advantageous offers, necessitate changes to the solicitation, cause delays in the acquisition, lead to offerors losing confidence in the process, or result in litigation. Sections L and M of the solicitation should use exactly the same wording as the SSP
- **Requesting too much information from the offerors.** Section L contains the instructions for preparing and submitting proposals. Clearly state the link between solicitation requirements, each evaluation factor, subfactor, and the proposal preparation instructions. Request only the information needed to evaluate proposals against the evaluation factors and subfactors. The solicitation may specify a total page limit, font, and type size
- **Performance-based acquisition.** The FAR requires that the contracting officer provide in the acquisition plan the rationale if a performance-based contract or task order will *not* be used or why a performance-based contract or task order for services is contemplated on an other than a firm-fixed price basis. The benefits of using functional or performance-based requirements include increased competition, access to the best commercial technology, better technical solutions, and possible lower acquisition costs

Promote understanding of the government's requirements through pre-solicitation exchanges with industry (FAR Subpart 15.2). Accomplish this through use of various communication fora such as posting notices to the *FedBizOpps* page, advance-planning briefings for industry, providing comments, challenging elements of the acquisition, proposing methods to reduce proposal and contract costs, provide feedback on the proposed pricing arrangement, and identify requirements that account for a high percentage of the total cost. Maximize the use of contractual incentives to ensure the contract represents an effective business relationship. Use oral presentations, where practical.

3. **Proposal submission information.** A clearly written Section L that provides proposal preparation instructions simplifies the evaluators' task. Although the factors and subfactors must be tailored for each requirement, evaluators do not have to learn a new format for each proposal—they evaluate the same requirements in each proposal in the same manner.

CHAPTER 7 EVALUATION PROCESS

1. **Overview.** The SSEB performs an in-depth, systematic evaluation of the proposals against the evaluation factors and subfactors set forth in the solicitation. Using these evaluation factors, subfactors, and applicable evaluation standards, the SSEB accomplishes an equitable, impartial, and comprehensive evaluation against the solicitation requirements. Evaluation factors and subfactors must be applied consistently.

Specific evaluation processes and tasks vary between source selections, but the basic objective remains constant—to provide the SSA with information to make an informed and reasoned selection. Toward this goal, the evaluators identify deficiencies, strengths, weaknesses, clarifications, and uncertainties applicable to each proposal.

In addition to the SSA using this information to make the source selection decision, the contracting officer uses it to establish a competitive range when discussions are necessary, and provides the information to the respective offeror during clarifications or discussions.

It is imperative to have an orderly method for identification, reporting, and tracking each of the deficiencies, strengths, weaknesses, and uncertainties. Using an automated evaluation tool can ease the administrative burden associated with these tasks.

2. **Evaluation steps.** The following are the general steps that the SSEB takes in evaluating proposals. Although these steps are identified in a linear manner, the process is actually iterative and many of the steps can occur concurrently. Except where noted, these steps apply to evaluation of both cost and non-cost factors. Other sections of this chapter provide additional information related to the past performance and price evaluations. The teams responsible for evaluating past performance, other non-cost factors, and price may perform their respective evaluations concurrently. Once the initial evaluations are completed, teams are encouraged to share the pricing data for an analysis of the proposed methodology to ensure the offeror understands the requirements of the solicitation.

a. Conduct **training.** Prior to the training, each member will be provided the solicitation, acquisition strategy, SSP, and rating scale to gain a high-level familiarity with the requirements. A training session should be held for all appointed evaluation team members to prepare them for the evaluation process. The training should include an overview of these documents and the source selection process, with detailed training on how to properly document each proposal's strengths, weaknesses, and risks.

b. Perform **pre-evaluation screening of proposals**. The contracting specialist, along with the AM or PM, if necessary, initially screens the written proposals. This phase is purely administrative and not a qualitative evaluation. Proposals are screened for adherence to written proposal submission instructions contained in Section L and verify that each proposal includes all required information, representations and certifications, and electronic media in the quantities and format specified in the solicitation.

c. Identify and document proposal uncertainties such as:

- Ambiguous proposal language
- Instances in which the offeror failed to provide sufficient information to evaluate whether the proposal should be placed in the competitive range or, if discussions are not anticipated, whether the offeror should be awarded the contract

If additional information is required to enhance the government's understanding of the proposal, the contracting officer may request the information from the offeror by means of the clarification process.

d. Identify and document deficiencies, items for negotiation, and when using the tradeoff process, proposal strengths, weaknesses, and risks. Evaluators identify and document proposal deficiencies and any items for negotiations:

- The non-cost evaluators identify and document the proposal strengths, weaknesses, and risks
- The past performance evaluators identify and document performance risks using the rating system established in the SSP

If cost realism is performed, the cost evaluators assess cost risks at the same time. Do not score risk. The difference between the estimated cost and the most probable cost estimate provides the evaluators insight into the risk associated with performance from a cost perspective. The larger the difference between the cost proposed and the most probable cost estimate, the higher the risk that the offeror does not understand the requirement. When using the tradeoff process, identification of proposal strengths, weaknesses, risks, and deficiencies is crucial because:

- The contracting officer considers these items when determining the competitive range
- Specific information on the relative strengths and weaknesses form the basis for tradeoff analysis and the source selection decision

e. Assign ratings for non-cost evaluation factors when using the tradeoff process. This is a two-step process. Past performance, technical and management approach, and cost and price proposals are independently evaluated by separate teams. Each team convenes to discuss the offeror's proposal and to share the evaluators' views on the offerors' strengths, weaknesses, risks, and deficiencies related to its assigned evaluation factor(s), subfactor(s), and to reach a final consensus rating for each factor and subfactor. Teams must not average the individual evaluations to reach the consensus. A consensus requires a meeting of the minds on the assigned

rating and associated deficiencies, strengths, weaknesses, and risks. In exceptional cases where the evaluators are unable to reach an agreement without unreasonably delaying the source selection process, the evaluation report will include the majority conclusion and the dissenting view(s) with supporting rationale.

f. Prepare a summary evaluation report. Once evaluations of past performance, price, and risk are completed, the SSEB Chairperson prepares a summary report that includes the evaluated price, the final rating for each evaluation factor and subfactor, and a discussion of the associated strengths, weaknesses, deficiencies, and risks for each proposal.

3. Past performance evaluations. The past performance evaluators assess the performance risk associated with each proposal. The final assessment describes the degree of confidence the government has in each offeror's probability and likelihood of successful contract performance based on that offeror's demonstrated record of performance under similar contracts.

4. Price evaluations. Evaluate fixed-price contracts for their appropriateness considering market prices, appropriate risk, and the possibility of a "buy-in" scheme. For cost-reimbursement contracts, analyze the offerors' estimated costs for both realism and reasonableness. The cost realism analysis enables the government to determine each offeror's most probable cost of performance. This precludes an award decision based on an overly optimistic cost estimate. Additionally, whenever a cost analysis is performed, also perform a profit or fee analysis.

5. The independent government cost estimate (IGCE). The IGCE plays a key role in both cost and price analysis. It serves as a benchmark for price analysis and in cost realism. It may also serve as a benchmark for individual cost elements. While interchange between the evaluation committees is paramount, it is necessary to protect the cost or pricing data to avoid unintentional influence on the evaluators. To preclude prejudice, do not disclose pricing information to the non-cost evaluators during the early stages of evaluation. For the initial evaluation, provide the non-cost evaluators copies of the proposed contract line item numbers (CLINs), without pricing, so evaluators can ensure the proposed CLINs track to the associated narrative. Once the initial evaluations are completed, teams are encouraged to share the pricing data for an analysis of the proposed methodology to ensure the offeror understands the requirements of the solicitation.

Some general evaluation guidelines and recommendations for evaluating cost or price are:

- The price evaluators coordinate with the non-cost evaluators as necessary to ensure consistency between the proposed prices and other portions of the proposal. This interchange between evaluation committees begins after the initial validations are completed and continues through the remainder of the evaluation process to ensure that interrelationships are promptly identified and the evaluation findings reflect their recognition. This benefits both the non-price or price evaluators. For example, a clue to the soundness of a technical prediction may be obtained from an analysis of the related CLIN structure. Conversely, when deficiencies are uncovered in the technical proposal,

inadequacies in the cost or price, management, and other proposal components may be revealed

- When conducting price analysis, consider not only the total price, including options, but also the prices for the individual CLINs to ensure they are balanced. Unbalanced pricing exists when, despite an acceptable total evaluated price, the price of one or more contract line items is significantly over or understated as indicated by the application of cost or price analysis techniques. For more information on unbalanced pricing see FAR Subpart 15.4

CHAPTER 8

EXCHANGES WITH OFFERORS

1. **Overview.** The primary purpose of exchanges is to maximize the government's ability to get the best value based on the requirements and evaluation factors stated in the solicitation. Exchanges with offerors after receipt of proposals allow the government to obtain information needed to better understand the proposals and make this best value decision. The contracting officer controls all exchanges with offerors. Before participating in any exchange, the contracting officer should review the ground rules with the team members.

GROUND RULES FOR EXCHANGES

During exchanges with offerors, the government may not:

- **Favor one offeror over another**
- **Reveal an offeror's solution to another offeror**
- **Reveal an offeror's price without that offeror's written permission**
- **Disclose source selection information**
- **Reveal the name of individuals providing past performance information.**

2. **Types of exchanges.** Three types of exchanges may occur between the government and offerors after receipt of proposals.

- Contract award without discussions
- Clarifications before establishing the competitive range
- Exchanges after establishing the competitive range

a. **Contract award without discussions.** Before issuing a solicitation, the government determines if it intends to award the contract(s) without discussions and documents this approach in the SSP. In making this decision, consider whether or not the government will likely obtain the best value without discussions. An award without discussions is most likely to result in best value when requirements are clear and the marketplace is very competitive. The solicitation must clearly communicate the government's intent to award without discussions (FAR Subpart 15.2). However, even if the solicitation stated this intent, the government may still hold discussions, if appropriate, provided the contracting officer documents in the file why discussions were necessary.

The most limited exchanges are *clarifications* that occur when award will be made without discussions. Under these circumstances, the contracting officer may give offerors the opportunity to clarify certain aspects of their proposals. Examples are questions about the relevancy of the past performance or adverse past performance information on which an offeror has not yet had an opportunity to comment. These clarifications may be used to resolve minor irregularities, informalities, or clerical errors. Such clarifications provide minor explanations but do not revise or modify the proposal.

b. Clarifications before establishing the competitive range. Before making a competitive range decision, there may be a need to hold clarifications with some offerors to determine whether or not to include a proposal in the competitive range. The objective of these clarifications is to help evaluators understand and evaluate the proposal.

It is the offeror's responsibility to ensure that initial proposals are clear and complete. When holding clarifications, the contracting officer will only ask those questions necessary to understand the proposal and make the competitive range determination. Develop questions to solicit information that will clear any gray areas, such as perceived deficiencies, omissions, errors, or questions about an offeror's capability or pre-award survey. Information obtained during clarifications may not be used to revise a proposal, correct any deficiencies or material omissions, or change any technical or cost elements of a proposal. A clarification allows an offeror to correct a minor math error, correct a certification, or acknowledge a nonmaterial amendment. Clarifications are not *discussions*.

The contracting officer may find it necessary to hold discussions with several offerors in the competitive range (those offerors who have a reasonable chance of award). In establishing the competitive range, the contracting officer may include proposals that are favorable but do not comply with some technical requirement, proposals that are unclear or incomplete in places, and proposals with suspected mistakes.

The contracting officer makes the competitive range determination using prudent business judgment based on the specifics of the SSP. The contracting officer may need to hold clarifications with some offerors for the limited purpose of obtaining information necessary to establish the competitive range. The contracting officer *must* communicate with any offeror who would be excluded from the competitive range because of adverse past performance information, and give that offeror the chance to respond to any adverse past performance information to which it had not previously had an opportunity to respond. The contracting officer *may* also hold clarifications with offerors whose proposals are neither clearly in nor clearly out of the competitive range to address the "gray areas" in their proposals, such as perceived deficiencies. The contracting officer *may not* hold clarifications with offerors whose proposals are *clearly in or clearly out* of the competitive range except when adverse past performance information is involved. Furthermore, clarifications do not allow the offeror to revise the proposal at this stage.

The SSA, if other than the contracting officer, must approve the competitive range determination. Legal counsel should review the competitive range determination. The competitive range may be reduced for efficiency to the most highly rated proposals. In such cases, the solicitation must clearly state that the government reserves the right to limit the competitive range for the purposes of efficiency (FAR section 15.306(c)(2) and DFARS section 215-1(f)(4)). Establishing the competitive range results in greater efficiency by limiting the number of offerors with whom the government must hold discussions, and precludes offerors who are eliminated from consideration from having to spend additional resources just to make their proposals competitive with the rest of the field.

The contracting officer continually reassess the competitive range as discussions and evaluations continue, to ensure neither the government nor the offerors waste resources by

keeping proposals in that are no longer contenders for award. If an offeror is no longer considered to be a contender for award, the contracting officer notifies the offeror immediately of its elimination from the competitive range. See Chapter 10 that addresses pre-award and post-award notifications.

c. **Exchanges after establishing the competitive range.** The contracting officer conducts meaningful discussions with all offerors within the competitive range. The contracting officer tailors the discussions to each offeror's proposal relative to the solicitation requirements and evaluation factors.

To be meaningful, discussions must at a minimum, address:

- Deficiencies
- Significant weaknesses—those that are important enough to cause an evaluation factor to be rated marginal or unsatisfactory or the probability of not meeting a requirement so as to be rated moderate to high risk and minor weaknesses if the cumulative impact is significant
- Uncertainties or ambiguities
- Past performance concerns—including relevancy and any adverse information about which the offeror has not previously had an opportunity to comment
- Other proposal aspects that should be altered or explained to materially enhance an offeror's award potential

Additionally, it may be advantageous to address:

- Significant strengths—consider advising the offeror of significant strengths in their proposals. This will preclude the offeror from unknowingly eliminating or diminishing a desirable aspect of its proposal and enables the offeror to make informed tradeoff decisions
- Items subject to bargaining—such as price, schedule, technical requirements, type of contract, or other contract terms

Figure 8-1. Items for Discussion

The purpose of discussions is to maximize the government's ability to get the best value. During discussions, the objective should be to reach complete agreement and understanding by the government and the offeror regarding all the basic requirements in the solicitation.

The contracting officer confirms information obtained through discussions by requesting or allowing proposal revisions from offerors within the competitive range and still eligible for selection. Factors impacted by the responses must be evaluated again in the same manner as in the initial evaluation.

At the conclusion of discussions, the contracting officer gives all offerors remaining in the competitive range an opportunity to improve its proposal by submitting final proposal revisions by a common cutoff date and time. The contracting officer notifies the offerors that any late responses are subject to the solicitation provision on late submissions. After receipt of the offerors' revised proposals, the revised portions must be evaluated.

CHAPTER 9 – SELECTION AND AWARD

1. **Overview.** After evaluating final proposal revisions, the SSEB teams prepare the final evaluation report and, if requested by the SSAC, document the cost and technical trade-off analysis. The SSEB chair forwards the report to the SSAC. The SSAC reviews all reports and assists the SSA in making the final decision. In the absence of a SSAC, the SSEB performs the functions of the SSAC.

2. **Tradeoff analysis.** Tradeoff analysis is a subjective process that requires the SSA to exercise reasonable, prudent business judgment. When performing this analysis, the SSA considers each proposal's total evaluated price and the significance of the differences in the non-cost ratings as indicated by each proposal's strengths, weaknesses, and risks. The SSA considers these differences in light of the relative importance of each evaluation factor. Figure 9-1 identifies suggested steps in performing tradeoff analysis.

The comparison process is complex and depending upon the evaluation factors, the SSA may exercise significant latitude in selecting the successful offeror(s). If the lowest-priced proposal is not the superior proposal in terms of non-cost factors, a tradeoff analysis is required.

- Identify the proposal differences that surfaced during evaluations
- Analyze their impact on the acquisition objectives in light of the relative importance of the evaluation factors
- Compare proposals as appropriate
- Assess the best mix of cost and non-cost benefits to determine whether the strengths of a higher-rated proposal merit the price premium.

Figure 9-1. Steps in Performing Tradeoff Analysis

3. **Documenting the proposal comparison.** The SSAC prepares documentation explaining the final results of the evaluation and proposal comparison. *This does not include a selection recommendation.* The SSA uses this documentation as an aid when making the source selection decision based on exercising prudent business judgment as to which proposal(s) offer the best value to the government. The SSAC and SSEB chairs provide the information to the SSA by means of one or more briefings and a formal report. Figure 9-2 illustrates a sample format for the report. For source selections less than \$10 million, the information may be included as part of the Negotiation Memorandum. The documentation should be clear, concise, and use cross-references rather than repeat information in existing documents.

1. Introduction: Include information about the SSP; basis for award, evaluation factors, subfactors; SSO structure; summary of the solicitation requirements; and the number of offerors solicited, responded, and in the competitive range.
2. Evaluation results: Summarize the evaluation results of each offeror's proposal.
3. Comparative analysis of proposals: Compare both cost and non-cost factors of the proposals. Discuss the evaluation factors and subfactors first individually and then comparatively. Include each proposal's major strengths and weaknesses as well as the details and results of the technical tradeoff analysis and justification for payment of a premium.
4. Risk assessment: Discuss the overall impact of significant risks associated with each proposal within the competitive range, including performance risks and the degree of confidence in the realism of the proposed cost or price.
5. Summary: Briefly summarize the comparative analyses, expressed in brief statements, and the issues considered significant to the SSA's decision. *Do not include a selection recommendation.*

SSA makes the source selection decision using rational, prudent, and independent judgment based on a comparative analysis of the proposals. The analysis must be consistent with the evaluation factors and process as described in the solicitation and SSP. Beyond this, the SSA possesses broad discretion in making the source selection decision.

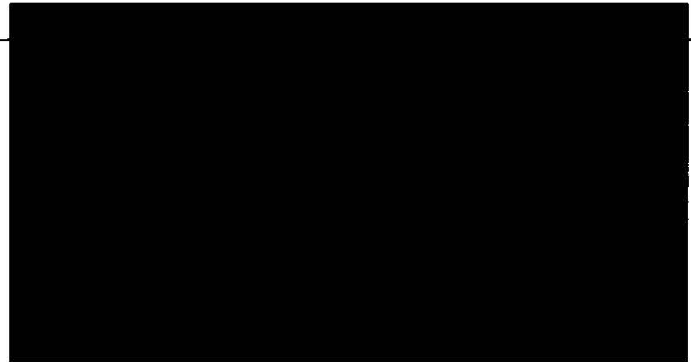


Figure 9-3.
Source Selection Decision Criteria

To determine which proposal(s) provide the best value, the SSA analyzes the differences between competing proposals based on the facts and circumstances of the specific acquisition. The evaluation scores of the SSEB or SSAC do not bind the SSA as long as the SSA has a rational basis for the differing opinion. The SSA makes the final decision.

If the SSA has doubts about the evaluation findings and analysis, the SSA may require the SSEB and SSAC to conduct a complete or partial re-evaluation and analysis. Additionally, the SSA has the authority to convene a new SSEB and SSAC or to personally conduct an independent evaluation.

5. Documenting the source selection decision. The SSA documents the rationale for selecting the successful offeror(s) in an independent, stand-alone document. The source selection decision (SSD) memorandum explains how the successful proposal(s) measured up against other offeror's proposals based on the evaluation factors and subfactors in the solicitation and discusses the judgment used in making tradeoff. This document becomes part of the official contract file and may be released in litigation or under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), provided that any information exempt under the FOIA is redacted.

6. Awarding the Contract(s). After the SSA signs the SSD, the contracting officer prepares the required congressional notification as appropriate, executes, and distributes the contract(s) to the successful offeror(s).

CHAPTER 10

NOTIFICATION TO UNSUCCESSFUL OFFERORS

The contracting officer promptly notifies unsuccessful offerors in writing after contract award or whenever its proposal is eliminated from the competition. The type of information that must be included in the notice depends on whether it is sent before or after contract award. Figure 10-1 provides a side-by-side comparison of the differences between pre-award and post-award notices.

	PRE-AWARD NOTICE	POST-AWARD NOTICE
Who must be notified?	Any offeror whose proposal was excluded from the competitive range or otherwise eliminated from the competition before contract award.	Any offeror whose proposal was in the competitive range but was not selected for award or who had not received a pre-award notice.
When must it be sent?	Promptly after the offeror's proposal was eliminated from the competition.	Within 3 days after the date of contract award.
What is included in the notice?	<p>A summary of the basis for the determination; and a statement that the Government will not consider any further proposal revisions from the offeror.</p> <p>Small business offerors are entitled to additional information as described at FAR Subpart 15.5.</p> <p>After contract award and upon request from an offeror who previously received a pre-award notice, the contracting officer must provide the offeror the information normally provided as part of a post-award notice.</p>	<p>Number of proposals received, name(s) and address(es) of awardee(s); and items, quantities, and unit prices of each awardee. If listing the unit prices is impracticable, include only the total contract price. Upon request, the items, quantities, and any stated unit prices of each award should be made publicly available, but check FOIA exemptions prior to release.</p> <p>A <u>summary</u> of the reason(s) the offeror's proposal was not accepted, unless the price information readily reveals the reason.</p>

Figure 10-1. Comparison of Pre-award and Post-award Notices

CHAPTER 11

DEBRIEFING OF OFFERORS

1. **Overview.** The contracting officer debriefs unsuccessful offerors who submit a timely, written request for a debriefing. The government may also debrief the contract awardee(s) if requested. FAR Subpart 15.5 provides the regulatory policy on debriefings. Debriefings are not required for awards pursuant to FAR Subpart 8.4, although the government should provide a response to express the government's appreciation to the offerors for participating in the solicitation. Debriefings may be oral or written. The preferred method is written. Either method used must be documented in the contract file.

Offerors put considerable resources into preparing and submitting proposals, and fairness dictates that the government promptly debriefs them and explains why a proposal was unsuccessful. Comprehensive, timely, and thorough debriefings increase competition, reduce costs, encourage offerors to invest resources in the government marketplace, permit offerors to release resources to work on other projects, and strengthen the government's relationship and credibility with industry.

2. Purposes of a debriefing.

a. A debriefing:

- Explains the rationale for the offeror's exclusion from the competition
- Instills confidence in the offeror that it received fair treatment
- Ensures the offeror that appropriately qualified personnel evaluated their proposal in accordance with the solicitation and applicable laws and regulations
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses in the offeror's proposal so the offeror can prepare better proposals in future government acquisitions
- Reduces misunderstandings and protests
- Gives the offeror an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the solicitation, discussions, evaluation, and the source selection process

b. A debriefing is not:

- A page-by-page analysis of the offeror's proposal
- A comprehensive, point-by-point comparison of the proposals of the debriefed offeror and other offeror(s)
- A debate or defense of the government's award decision or evaluation results

3. **Pre-award versus post-award debriefings.** Each successful and unsuccessful offeror is entitled to only one debriefing. Figure 11-1 outlines when each type of debriefing is appropriate and what may and may not be disclosed at each. The pre-award is more restrictive in terms of what may be disclosed to the unsuccessful offeror since the procurement is on-going at the time of the debriefing.

	PRE-AWARD DEBRIEFING	POST-AWARD DEBRIEFING
Who is entitled to be a debriefing	Offerors excluded from the competitive range or otherwise excluded from the competition before award.	Any unsuccessful offeror who has not had a pre-award debriefing.
When must the Government conduct a debriefing	As soon as practicable after receipt of a timely, written request. The contracting officer may refuse the request for a pre-award debriefing if it is not in the government's best interest to conduct a pre-award debriefing. ^{(1) (2)}	Within 5 days, to the maximum extent practicable, after receipt of a timely, written request for a debriefing. ⁽³⁾
What is a timely request	A request received by the contracting activity within 3-calendar days after the offeror received notice of exclusion from the competition. ⁽⁴⁾	A request received by the contracting activity within 3 calendar days after the offeror received notice of contract award. ⁽⁴⁾
What cannot be disclosed	Point-by-point comparisons of a debriefed offeror's proposal with other proposals, proprietary information or information exempt from release under the FOIA ⁽⁵⁾ , number of offerors, identity of other offerors, content of other offeror's proposals, ranking of other offerors, and evaluation of other offerors.	Point-by-point comparisons of a debriefed offeror's proposal with other proposals, identity of offerors other than the awardee(s), content of proposals (including the awardee's), and proprietary information or information exempt from release under FOIA. ⁽⁵⁾
What should be discussed	Evaluation results of significant elements in the debriefed offeror's proposal ⁽⁶⁾ , summary of the rationale for eliminating the offeror from the competition, reasonable responses to relevant questions about whether source selection procedures contained in the solicitation, applicable regularities were followed in the process of eliminating the offeror from competition.	Deficiencies and significant weaknesses of the debriefed offeror's proposal, if applicable. Evaluation ratings of the debriefed offeror and awardee—but only to the second level of evaluation. The debriefed offeror's and awardee's total evaluated prices, including unit prices if practicable. Overall ranking of all proposals, when a ranking was developed as part of the source selection. Make and model of any commercial end items proposed by the awardee. Summary of the rationale for award decision. Reasonable responses to relevant questions about whether source selection procedures contained in the solicitation, applicable regulations, and other applicable authorities were followed. Other information, as appropriate.

Figure 11-1. Comparison of Pre-award and Post-award Debriefings

Notes:

- (1) The offeror may request the debriefing be delayed until after contract award. When delayed, the debriefing shall include all the information provided in a post-award debriefing.
- (2) In the event either the government or offeror delays the debriefing, the contracting officer must provide the debriefing within the timeframe established for post-award debriefings.
- (3) If an offeror submits an untimely request for debriefing, the contracting officer may nonetheless conduct a debriefing if feasible. In such case, inform the offeror the request is untimely.
- (4) Do not count the day the offeror received the notice. Start with the next day. Send debriefing notices by certified mail with return receipt in order to establish the date the offeror received it.
- (5) Include such things as trade secrets; privileged or confidential information; e.g., commercial and financial information, and cost data; and the names of individuals providing past performance information. It does not include information otherwise available without restriction to the government or public.
- (6) If the element was significant enough to eliminate the offeror from the competitive range, it is probably significant for debriefing purposes. Include both positive and negative elements of the offeror's proposal to help improve future proposals.

4. Notification of debriefing. Inform the offeror of the scheduled debriefing date by certified mail with return receipt. If the offeror requests a later date, the contracting officer should require the offeror acknowledge in writing that it was offered an earlier date, but requested the later date instead. This procedure protects the government's interests if the offeror subsequently files a protest.

5. Debriefing methods and location. Debrief only one successful or unsuccessful offeror at a time. The contracting officer is responsible for selecting the method and location of the debriefing. Select a location that provides a professional and non-distracting environment. Although oral debriefings may be used, the preferred method is written debriefings. Coordinate all proposed debriefings through legal counsel.

6. Attendees.

a. Government personnel. The contracting officer chairs and controls the debriefing and selects the government attendees. It is very important to ensure appropriate government personnel attend so that a meaningful debriefing is achieved. The contracting officer may rely on SSEB members to address specialized areas of the offeror's proposals. In the event there are indicators that a protest is likely, inform the legal counsel as soon as it becomes known. However, the contracting officer may not deny a debriefing because a protest is threatened or has already been filed.

b. Debriefed offeror personnel. The contracting officer should ask an offeror to identify all of the firm's individuals by name and position that will attend the debriefing. Normally, do not restrict the number of personnel the debriefed offeror may bring unless there are space limitations.

7. Preparing for a debriefing. A poorly prepared debriefing may increase the likelihood of a protest. The extent of preparation necessary varies considerably with the complexity of each acquisition. Debriefings are time sensitive; therefore, preparation should begin as soon as proposal evaluation is complete. The SSO members may assist in preparing debriefing charts. The contracting officer must brief all government personnel who will attend the debriefing on their roles and expected demeanor during the debriefing.

8. General outline for debriefings. The contracting officer is responsible for determining the exact format for each debriefing. Areas to include:

- Introduction
- Purpose of the debriefing
- Ground rules and agenda
- Evaluation factors/sub-factors
- Source selection organization*
- Evaluation results
- Award decision rationale



9. Handling questions. The contracting officer may request questions from the offeror's personnel be funneled to its main spokesperson. This enhances the orderly conduct of a debriefing. It may be helpful to request written questions in advance to use in preparation for the debriefing. At the conclusion of the debriefing, advise the offeror that the debriefing is officially concluded. At the discretion of the contracting officer, questions submitted by the offeror after the debriefing may be answered. However, the contracting officer must advise the offeror that the information is not considered part of the official debriefing thereby not extending the protest time period.

10. Other information to ensure a meaningful debriefing. In a post-award debriefing, the contracting officer discloses all significant weaknesses and strengths of the debriefed offeror's proposal. When determining what is a significant weakness or strength, consider whether it impacted the evaluation rating. If the weakness was significant enough to warrant mentioning it during discussions, it is probably significant for debriefing purposes. Address the significant advantages of an offeror's proposal.

Provide a summary of the rationale for the contract award decision. The SSA's source selection decision memorandum contains the rationale. Under certain circumstances, other information may be released, on a case-by-case basis with guidance from legal counsel. Examples of such information include:

- The final overall ratings for non-cost factors for other unsuccessful offerors
- The final total evaluated price of the other unsuccessful offerors. Release is limited to those situations where an unsuccessful offeror consents or the agency determines after consulting with the unsuccessful offeror, that it would not suffer competitive harm from such a release

- Other information about an awardee's proposal that is not otherwise releasable when prior written authorization is obtained from the offeror. Under these circumstances, the contracting officer and legal counsel should explain to the successful offeror(s) how it is in both the government's and the offeror's interest for them to authorize such release.

11. The post-debriefing memorandum. The contracting officer includes a summary of each debriefing in the contract file. A good post-debriefing memorandum is essential if the acquisition is reopened or re-solicited as a result of a protest or otherwise within one year of the contract award date. In those circumstances, the law requires the contracting agency make available to all offerors, information disclosed at the debriefings regarding the prior successful offeror's proposal. This requirement is designed, in part, to place all offerors on a level playing field. The post debriefing memoranda include at a minimum:

- A list of all debriefing attendees
- A summary of the information disclosed during the debriefing. The most efficient means for doing this is to identify the debriefing charts and attach a copy of them to the memorandum
- The substance of all questions and answers discussed at, or provided after the debriefing

APPENDIX A

SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Release of source selection information.** The *Procurement Integrity Act* forbids disclosing source selection information on a federal contract prior to award. An exception exists when release is in the best interest of the public and would not jeopardize the integrity or successful completion of the procurement.

The SSA is authorized to approve release of source selection information when the release is after issuance of the solicitation, but prior to contract award. Consult legal counsel prior to releasing any source selection information prior to contract award.

2. **Security briefing.** Ensure all SSO personnel attend a security briefing that emphasizes that each SSO member:

- Is responsible for security of the evaluation and proposal materials and other source selection and proprietary information related to the procurement
- Be knowledgeable of, and adhere to, governing security procedures and regulations
- Not discuss, negotiate, or communicate on matters related to the source selection with any individual not assigned to the SSO, unless authorized, and then only within appropriately secure areas
- Challenge the presence of any apparently unauthorized individual within the SSO physical location

3. **Required certificates and reports.** Each SSO member, including support personnel, must sign a certificate of nondisclosure. Additionally, all government evaluators, SSEB and SSAC members, and advisors must file an OGE Form 450, Confidential Financial Disclosure Report. Non-Government personnel who may be involved in the source selection are not required to complete an OGE Form 450, but must sign a nondisclosure form. Consult legal counsel for any special situations such as possible conflicts of interest.

4. **Handling of source selection materials.** Handle proposal and evaluation material in a manner consistent with “For Official Use Only” unless otherwise classified. Establish sufficient safeguards to protect the material from disclosure to non-source selection personnel. Establish appropriate procedures for disposal (e.g., shredding or burn bag disposal) of the material when it is no longer required by the SSO.

5. **Security of physical facilities.** In more complex source selections, it may be necessary to establish procedures for ensuring the security of the source selection physical facilities. These procedures may include:

- Requiring identification to access the SSO area and requiring authorized visitors (e.g., maintenance and service personnel) to sign in and out
- Ensuring access points to the facilities are either manned at all times by a representative of the SSO or kept locked with appropriate key or password control procedures
- Establishing procedures for approving visitors to the facilities

- Conducting security inspections and spot checks

6. Responsibilities. All SSO members are responsible for security of source selection information. In more complex source selections it may be beneficial to designate certain members of the SSO to oversee and perform security control functions. These duties may be collateral duties or full-time duties of the team member.

7. Handling classified materials. If the solicitation involves handling classified material, the contracting officer should contact the program security office to identify an individual to serve as security advisor to the SSEB.

APPENDIX B

PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Experience, education, and skills.** Identifying the experience, education, business, and technical skills required of SSO personnel is the key to a successful selection. Define the required skills and experience with enough flexibility to allow substitution of training for experience.

2. **Freedom from bias or conflict of interest.** The SSO members should be free from a perception of bias and from conflicts of interest. Financial interests in offerors and employment discussions with offerors are examples of conflicts of interests that would preclude an employee from participating in a source selection. Contact the agency ethics advisor for guidance.

3. **Support personnel.** Upon finalizing the primary evaluation team, determine the need for any of the following support personnel:

- Administrative assistant
- Secretarial support for the SSEB and SSAC
- Security custodians and special security personnel
- Security advisor
- Librarian and document-control personnel
- Visual aids or video support personnel
- Information technology support
- Property support
- Budget personnel

4. **Advisors.** Ensure the determination required in FAR 3 Subpart 2 is completed as necessary prior to engaging support contractors to serve in advisory roles, assist in price analysis, or perform administrative duties related to source selections. Support contractors may not be voting members of the SSO. They have access only to those portions of the proposals and source selection information required to perform their SSO duties. Advise potential offerors of the participation of support contractors in the source selection.

5. **Staffing levels.** Identify the staffing as full or part time personnel and specify the point in the evaluation process at which personnel must be available. In many cases, formal memoranda of appointment authenticated by the SSA are desirable.

6. **Management support.** Management support is critical to obtaining people for the SSO. Managers may be reluctant to release personnel for SSEBs, especially if a prolonged evaluation period is projected. Some functional area heads may not be motivated to support such efforts because it is not a part of the performance standards. Top management support can discourage any such reluctance.

APPENDIX C

USING CURRENT AND PAST PERFORMANCE AS A SOURCE SELECTION FACTOR

1. Introduction. Where possible, use past performance information available from government-wide databases. Using such information helps expedite and streamline the evaluation process. If information is not readily available from existing databases, then seek it from other government entities and private sector sources, e.g., questionnaires, published commercial evaluations, or interviews.

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) and DOD have published the following guides that pertain to evaluation of past performance information:

OFPP Guide: *Best Practices for Collecting and Using Current and Past Performance Information* available at:

<http://www.arnet.gov/Library/OFPP/BestPractices/pastperformguide.htm>.

DOD Guide: A Guide to Collection and Use of Past Performance Information, available at:

<http://www.acq.osd.mil/scst/ppirs.html>.

This evaluation is different from making a responsibility determination; therefore, you do not have to refer adverse or negative findings related to small businesses to the Small Business Administration.

2. Relative importance or weight assigned to past performance. The government may assign any weight or relative importance to past performance compared to any other evaluation factor. However, the weight assigned to past performance must ensure that it is meaningfully considered throughout the source selection process and will be a valid discriminator among the proposals.

3. Drafting instructions to offerors. In Section L of the solicitation, clearly state what past performance information the offeror must submit as part of its proposal. Tailor the proposal submission requirements to reflect the complexity of the procurement and the relative importance assigned to past performance. Request only the information necessary for the evaluation.

4. Contract references. Request that offerors submit a list of government and non-government contract references including contract number, contract type, dollar value; place of performance, date of award, whether performance is on-going or complete, extent of subcontracting, and the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of at least two points of contact for each contract. Require the list to include all relevant on-going contracts or contracts completed during a "specified period." If you anticipate the number of contracts will be excessive, limit the submission to a specific number of the most recent, relevant contracts. If appropriate, require the contracts to have been on going for a certain period of time, since newly awarded contracts will most likely not provide sufficient information.

Limit the “specified period” to not more than three years from the solicitation release date. The government must retain past performance information for no longer than three years after completion of the contract. A shorter period may be appropriate for acquisitions where there are numerous actions or many vendors providing the required items.

Also allow offerors to submit information related to their past performance on relevant efforts for state and local governments, private sector clients, and teaming or joint efforts. Additionally, if offerors have no relevant past performance, allow them to provide past performance information for their key personnel. This will help ensure firms new to the federal process have a fair opportunity to compete and reduce the instances where offerors have no record of past performance.

5. Description of past performance. It may be beneficial to allow offerors the opportunity to provide details on past performance problems and the corrective actions taken. As appropriate, have the offerors provide such information as part of their proposals.

6. Sources of information. Rely on existing documentation from federal databases to the maximum extent practicable. This expedites and streamlines the source evaluation process:

- Advise potential offerors that the government may use past performance information obtained from sources other than those identified by the offeror and the information obtained may be used for the best value decision
- Advise potential offerors that the government may not obtain information on all of the listed contract references and may not contact all of the identified POCs

If adequate documentation is not readily available, the government should seek the necessary information from individuals having knowledge about the offeror’s past performance, e.g., contracting officers and their representatives. Use questionnaires or interviews to illicit the information from these individuals. Consider the following when using questionnaires:

- Keep the questionnaire short. Typically it should be no longer than 1-3 pages; long surveys are not returned timely, if returned at all
- Include a copy of the questionnaire in the solicitation as an attachment. This informs the offerors what information the government will request
- Either distribute the questionnaire to the POCs or have the offerors distribute it. In the latter case, the POCs must return the completed questionnaires directly to the government. Having the offerors send out the questionnaire may save time and resources
- When practical, contact the respective POC prior to sending out a survey to advise them that they will be receiving it and emphasize the importance of promptly returning the completed surveys

7. Relevant past performance. Include a definition in the solicitation of what constitutes relevant past performance. Factors that may be used to define relevancy include the size, scope, complexity, and contract type. The Comptroller General recommends a definition such as “the same or similar service” as to not overly restrict the government’s ability to consider information.

Require the offerors to provide a description of how the contract references are relevant to the immediate acquisition. This information may be provided as part of the proposal. In some cases, prior contracts as a whole may be relevant to the current acquisition, while only portions of other contracts may be relevant. The offeror should specify which portions of those contracts are relevant to the current acquisition.

Inform vendors that when an offeror’s or teaming member’s firm is divided into severable segments, e.g., division, group, or unit, that the government will evaluate only the past performance of those segments of the firm(s) that will actually perform the work.

8. Drafting evaluation criteria (Section M). In Section M of the solicitation, clearly state how past performance will be evaluated, its relative importance, and how offerors with no relevant past performance history will be evaluated.

9. Synergy of evaluation considerations. Use past performance to streamline the source selection process. For example, instead of evaluating management as an evaluation factor, assess management effectiveness as part of the past performance evaluation. A good record of management is an indicator that the offeror should perform well in this area on the immediate acquisition. Using past performance in this way eliminates the need for the offeror to submit management and quality plans.

10. Past performance subfactors or considerations. At a minimum, consider the offeror’s record of complying with contractual requirements in the areas of schedule, technical quality, and cost control. For contracts in the services, IT, and operations support sectors, evaluate past performance using the assessment elements in Figure D-2.

11. Stand-alone evaluation factor. Do not integrate past performance with other non-cost factors. Past performance is a separate evaluation factor in order to reduce the chances of its impact being lost within other factors.

12. Evaluating past performance. The evaluation team is responsible for conducting the past performance evaluation to determine the degree of performance risk involved in accepting each offeror’s proposal. The final product of this analysis is a performance risk assessment. The evaluation team documents the performance risks, strengths, and weaknesses indicated by each offeror’s past performance. When considering adverse information, determine if the government may have contributed to the problem and, if so, determine to what extent.

Use the following general steps when evaluating past performance:

a. **Gather contract efforts.** Gather basic information on contract efforts that are relevant to the immediate acquisition. The government has broad discretion regarding the type of data to be considered in the past performance evaluation. Consider a wide array of information from a variety of sources, but the government is not compelled to rely on all the information available. For example, although the government may ask for contract references for a three-year period, it may receive sufficient recent, relevant information to justify limiting the consideration to only the last two years.

b. **Determine relevance of past performance information.** Relevance is a threshold question, not a separate element or subfactor of past performance. In order for an offeror's record of past performance to be an indicator of its future performance, the past performance information must be relevant to the pending contract.

c. **Assess quality of past performance of individual efforts.** Assess the quality of the offeror's past performance on relevant efforts. If possible, contact two POCs on each contract effort selected for an in-depth review. Contracting officers, contracting officer representatives, and program management office representatives often are excellent sources of information. At this point, the Government may or assign ratings to each individual contract effort. If ratings are assigned, use them as guides for arriving at the consensus rating.



d. **Assign a rating to the past performance factor.** The final step is for the evaluation team to arrive at a consensus rating for the past performance factor using the rating scale in the SSP. Occasionally, the evaluators are unable to arrive at a consensus. In such cases, include the dissenting opinion as part of the assessment report.

In determining the rating, consider the number and severity of problems, the demonstrated effectiveness of corrective actions taken (not just planned or promised), the overall work record, and the degree of relevance of all of the considered efforts. Value overall results over problem-free management.

The final assessment includes a rationale for the conclusions reached, including instances of good or poor performance related to the solicitation requirement. Base the rationale on analysis, verification, or corroboration of the past performance information, and evaluate it against the evaluation factors stated in the solicitation.

13. Lack of past performance information. If the offeror is truly a new entity and none of the company principals have relevant work experience, the offeror is considered to have no past performance. Evaluate the offeror's lack of past performance as an unknown risk, having no favorable or unfavorable impact on the evaluation. Instances of no past performance information warrant a neutral rating.

14. Past performance versus experience. It is important to understand the difference between an offeror's experience and its past performance. In some source selections, it may be beneficial to evaluate the offeror's experience. Experience is *what* was done. Past performance is *how well* it was done.

The government may evaluate experience as part of past performance or include it as an independent factor or subfactor. However, to a slight degree, consideration of experience is inherent in the relevancy determination of a past performance evaluation. In making this determination consider if what the offeror did under a particular contract effort is relevant to the immediate effort. This is a threshold determination, not a qualitative analysis. When evaluating experience as part of a source selection, the government performs a comparative analysis where an offeror may get additional credit for breadth or depth of the experience. When evaluating both experience and past performance in the same source selection, use caution to ensure that double credit is not given for the same information.

15. Adverse past performance information. When adverse past performance information is obtained, contact the respective POC to get further clarification concerning the adverse past performance. Additionally, when practical, contact at least one other individual to get a second perspective on the contractor's performance on the identified work effort. Consider the context of the performance problems, any mitigating circumstances, the number and severity of the problems, the demonstrated effectiveness of corrective actions taken, and the overall work record.

If there is past performance information that adversely impacts an offeror's proposal, the government must provide the offeror an opportunity to address any such information on which the contractor has not had a previous opportunity to comment. Whether this opportunity occurs during clarifications or discussions depends upon whether discussions are anticipated and whether they have been opened. When addressing adverse past performance information, identify the contract, but never identify the name of the individual who provided the information. Summarize the problems with sufficient detail to give the offeror a reasonable opportunity to respond.

APPENDIX D

PAST PERFORMANCE INTERVIEWS

1. **Overview.** Figure D-1 provides sample questions for the interview followed by a past performance survey. The past performance survey must be marked in accordance with FAR section 3.104, Source Selection Information, For Official Use Only. Explain the purpose of the interview, and assure the interviewee's anonymity. Provide the interviewee with a generic description of the instant requirement, but do not release the solicitation number, program description, or other identifying information to the interviewee.

<p>Confirm the following information related to the effort: contract number, contractor's name and address, type of contract, complexity of work, description and location of work, contract dollar value, date of award, contract completion date, and type and extent of subcontracting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify past performance data to which the government may have access. • If the award amount or delivery schedule changed, find out why. • If the government has evidence of a problem on the referenced contract that the interviewee is unfamiliar with, ask for the name of another individual that might have the information. • Ask for names and phone numbers of additional POCs. • What role in the contract effort did you play and during what time period did you hold this position? • If a problem surfaced, what did the government and contractor do to fix it? • Did the contractor appear to use personnel with appropriate skills and expertise? 	<p>How did the contractor perform considering technical performance or quality of the product or service; schedule; cost control (if appropriate); business relations; and management?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the contractor cooperative in resolving issues? • Were there any particular significant risks involved in performance of the effort? • Did the company appear to apply sufficient resources (personnel and facilities) to the effort? • If the company used subcontractors, what was the relationship between the prime and the sub? How well did the prime manage the subcontractors? Did the subcontractors perform the bulk of the effort or just add depth on particular technical areas? • Has the firm performed other past efforts with the referenced agency/firm? • What are the company's strong points? • What are the company's weak points? • Does the interviewee have any reservations about recommending a future contract award to this company? • Does the interviewee know of anyone else who might have past performance information on the offeror?
--	---

Figure D-1. Sample Interview Questions and Topics

- 1. Quality or produce or service.** Conformance with contract requirements, specifications and standards of good workmanship, e.g., commonly accepted technical, professional, environmental, or safety and health standards.
- 2. Schedule.** Timeliness of contractor against the completion of the contract, task orders, milestones, delivery schedules, administrative requirements - e.g., efforts that contribute to or affect the schedule variance.
- 3. Cost control.** Not required for firm fixed price or firm fixed price with economic price adjustment. Assess contractor's effectiveness in forecasting, managing, and controlling contract cost
- 4. Business relations.** Integration and coordination of all activity needed to execute the contract, specifically the timeliness, completeness and quality of problem identification, corrective action plans, proposal submittals, and contractor's history of reasonable and cooperative behavior, customer satisfaction, timely award and management of subcontracts and, if the contractor met small, or small disadvantaged and women-owned business participation goals.
- 5. Management of key personnel.** Contractor performance in selecting key personnel, retaining key personnel, supporting key personnel, replacing when necessary key personnel.

Figure D-2. Assessment Elements

Blue	Performance met contract requirements and <u>significantly exceeded</u> contract requirements to the government's benefit. The contractual performance was accomplished with few minor problems for which corrective actions taken by the contractor were highly effective.
Green	Performance met contractual requirements and <u>exceeded some</u> to the government's benefit. The contractual performance was accomplished with some minor problems for which corrective actions taken by the contractor were effective.
Yellow	Performance <u>met</u> contractual requirements. The contractual performance contained some minor problems for which corrective actions were satisfactory.
Orange	Performance <u>did not meet some</u> contractual requirements. The contractual performance reflected a serious problem for which the contractor submitted minimal corrective actions. The contractor's actions were only marginally effective or were not fully implemented.
Red	Performance <u>did not meet</u> contractual requirements and <u>recovery did not occur</u> in a timely or cost effective manner. The contractual performance contained serious problem(s) for which the contractor's corrective actions were ineffective.
White	Offeror <u>has no</u> past performance or past performance information cannot be obtained, and the lack of past performance information is not due to the failure of the offeror to supply information.

Figure D-3. Assessment Ratings

1. Quality of product or services.

- a. To what extent did the contractor comply with the contract requirements?
- b. If reports were required, were they accurate in meeting contract requirements?
- c. To what extent did the contractor use appropriate personnel for contract requirements?
- d. To what extent did the contractor display technical excellence?

Blue Green Yellow Orange Red White

2. Cost control. Not applicable to Firm Fixed Price or Firm Fixed Price W/Economic Price Adjustment contracts.

- a. To what extent did the contractor remain within budget?
- b. To what extent did the contractor provide current, accurate, and complete billings?
- c. To what extent did the contractor maintain the relationship of negotiated costs to actual costs?
- d. To what extent did the contractor maintain cost efficiencies?
- e. To what extent was the contractor effective in forecasting contract costs?

Blue Green Yellow Orange Red White

3. Schedule.

- a. To what extent did the contractor meet interim milestones?
- b. To what extent was the contractor reliable?
- c. To what extent did the contractor respond to technical directions?
- d. To what extent did the contractor complete contract performance on time, including wrap-up and administration?
- e. To what extent were liquidated damages assessed?

Blue Green Yellow Orange Red White

4. Business Relations.

- a. To what extent did the contractor display effective management?
- b. To what extent did the contractor generate businesslike correspondence?
- c. To what extent was the contractor responsive to contract requirements?
- d. To what extent did the contractor apprise the government of problems or potential problems?
- e. To what extent was the contractor reasonable and cooperative?
- f. To what extent was the contractor flexible in responding to changing needs?
- g. To what extent did the contractor take pro-active measures in lieu of “knee-jerk” reactions?
- h. How effective were contractor recommended solutions?
- i. To what extent did the contractor maintain an effective business subcontracting program to meet subcontracting goals?
- j. To what extent did the contractor select key personnel appropriate to meet contract requirements?
- k. To what extent did the contractor retain qualified key personnel?
- l. To what extent did the contractor demonstrate that the corporation supported the decisions and actions taken by its key personnel?
- m. How well did the contractor react to personnel vacancies?
- n. To what extent was key personnel technical expertise used to enhance contract performance?

Blue Green Yellow Orange Red White

Figure D-4. Sample Past Performance Survey Questionnaire

APPENDIX E

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

1. **Introduction.** Oral presentations, sometimes referred to as oral proposals, provide offerors an opportunity to present information verbally that they would normally provide in writing. The government may conduct oral presentations in person or via video teleconference. However, a recorded video presentation does not constitute an oral presentation since it does not allow a real-time exchange of information.

Oral presentations may be beneficial in a variety of acquisitions. They are most useful when the requirements are clear, complete, and stated in performance or functional terms. Oral presentations may convey information in such diverse areas as responses to sample tasks or sample scenarios, understanding the requirements, experience, and relevancy of past performance. They are ideal for gathering information related to how qualified the offeror is to perform the work, how well the offeror understands the work, and how the offeror will approach the work. Potential benefits include:

- Increased time savings
- Improved communication between the Government and offeror
- Reduced Government evaluation costs
- Reduced offeror proposal preparation costs

2. **Deciding whether to request an oral presentation.** Some vendors will offer an oral presentation as part of their proposals. However, the government may also specifically request them in the solicitation. Decide whether the information the government needs for the evaluation criteria can be better presented orally, in writing, or through a combination of both. Do not incorporate oral statements in the contract by reference. Any information the government wants made a part of the contract must be submitted in writing. At a minimum, the offeror must submit in writing any certifications, representations, and a signed offer sheet, including any exceptions to the government's terms and conditions.

3. **Request for proposal information.** If oral presentations are appropriate, notify offerors in the solicitation that the government will use oral presentations as part of the evaluation process to select the successful contractor(s). Proposal preparation instructions must contain explicit instructions and guidance regarding the extent and nature of the process to be used. Require offerors to submit their briefing materials as a part of their written proposal. This provides the government an opportunity to review the materials and prepare any associated questions. Discourage elaborate presentations since they may distract from the information being presented. As a minimum, include the following information in the solicitation:

- The types of information the offeror must address during the oral presentations and how it relates to the evaluation criteria
- The required format and content of the presentation charts and any supporting documentation
- Any restrictions on the number of charts or the number of bullets per chart and how the Government will handle material determined to be noncompliant

- The approximate timeframe when the oral presentations will occur and how presentation order will be determined
- Whether any rescheduling will be permitted if an offeror requests a change after establishment of the schedule
- The total amount of time allotted to each offeror to conduct its oral presentation
- Who must make the presentation and a requirement that the offeror provide a list of names and position titles of the presenters
- Whether the presentation will be video or audio taped
- The location of the presentation site and a description of the site and resources available to the offeror
- Any rules or prohibitions regarding equipment and media
- Whether the government will consider documents or information referenced in the presentation material but not presented orally, and if so, how
- Any limitations on government-offeror interactions during and after the presentation;
- Whether the presentation will constitute discussions
- Whether the government will use the information in the oral presentation solely for source selection purposes or whether such information will become part of the contract
- Whether the offeror should include any price data in the presentation

4. Timing and sequencing. The government may conduct oral presentations before or after establishing the competitive range. When conducting the oral presentations *prior* to establishing the competitive range, exercise caution not to allow them to result in discussions. Preparing and presenting an oral presentation involves time and expense especially for small businesses, making it unwise to require offerors who are not likely to be serious candidates for award to have to make oral presentations. Normally, hold oral presentations after establishing the competitive range.

The contracting officer often draws lots to determine the sequence of the presentations. The time between the first and the last presentation should be as short as possible to minimize any advantage to the offerors that present later.

a. **Time limits.** Establish a total time limit for each offeror's presentation. It is not advisable to limit the time for individual topics or sections within the presentation—this detail should be the presenter's responsibility. If the government plans a question and answer session, exclude it from the allotted time or set a separate time limit for it. There is no ideal amount of time to be allotted. Make this decision using prudent business judgment based upon the complexity of the acquisition, experience, and lessons learned.

b. **Facility.** Normally, the government conducts the presentations at a facility it controls. This helps to guard against surprises and ensures a more level playing field. However, nothing precludes the government from conducting an oral presentation at an offeror's facility. This may be more efficient if site visits or other demonstrations are part of the source selection. If a government-controlled facility is used, make it available for inspection and, if warranted, a practice session process. Allowing offerors to get acquainted with the facility helps ensure that the facility does not detract from the presentation content.

c. **Recording the presentations.** Having an exact record of the presentation could prove useful both during the evaluation process and in this event of a protest or litigation. Oral presentations may be recorded using a variety of media, e.g., videotapes, audio tapes, written transcripts, or a copy of the offeror's briefing slides and presentation notes. The SSA determines the method and level of detail of the record.

If the government uses videotaping, allow for the natural behavior of the presenters. If slides or view graphs are used, position the camera to view both the podium and screen at the same time. Place the microphones so that all communications can be recorded clearly and at adequate volume. Every effort should be made to avoid letting the recording become the focus of the presentation. The recording is considered source selection information, and becomes part of the official record. Before the offeror leaves the facility or room, provide a copy to the offeror. The contracting officer then seals and securely stores the master copy of the recording to ensure there are no allegations of tampering in the event of a protest or court action.

d. **Government attendance.** The contracting officer or contract specialist chairs every presentation. The SSA may decide to attend all or none of the presentations, but not just some of the presentations. The evaluators attend every presentation.

e. **Presenters.** The offeror's key personnel who will perform or personally direct the work being described should conduct their relevant portions of the presentations. Key personnel include project managers, task leaders, and other in-house staff of the offeror or their prospective key subcontractor's organizations. This avoids the oral presentation becoming the domain of a professional presenter, which would increase costs, detract from the advantages of oral presentations, and could adversely affect small businesses.

f. **Reviewing the ground rules.** Prior to the presentations, the contracting officer or contract specialist reviews the ground rules with the government attendees, including discussing any restrictions on government-offeror information exchanges, information disclosure rules, documentation requirements, and housekeeping items.

If the government uses a quiz as part of the evaluation, the contracting officer or contract specialist needs to discuss the related ground rules. For example, can the offeror caucus or contact outside sources by cell phone before answering any questions?

Avoid too much control since it inhibits exchange of information. However, if the government intends to avoid discussions, the contracting officer should control all exchanges during the presentation. Prior to conducting any oral presentations, review the restrictions in FAR Subpart 15.3.

g. **Evaluation of presentations.** There is no firm rule regarding the best time to evaluate the presentation. The government may perform evaluations immediately following each presentation or after all of the presentations are completed. In the latter case, the evaluators should caucus following each presentation to exchange reactions, summarize potential strengths and weaknesses, and verify perceptions and understandings. Using preprinted evaluation forms

helps the evaluators collect their thoughts and impressions. Remember, even if the government uses preprinted forms, evaluators must provide the rationale for their conclusions.

APPENDIX F

COST REALISM ANALYSIS

1. **Overview.** Perform cost realism analysis when a cost contract is anticipated. In accordance with FAR Subpart 15.3, a cost realism analysis may also be performed on fixed-price incentive contracts, or in exceptional cases, on other competitive fixed-price contracts. Adjustments for the most probable cost estimate should not be based solely on differences from the independent government cost estimate (IGCE). Where performance specifications are used, the IGCE is based on the government's anticipated approach to the work, which may differ from the offeror's approach. The IGCE rates may not be comparable. The technical evaluation should reveal any areas where an contractor's approach is inadequate or where the identified resources is unrealistic, given the proposed approach. The technical evaluators and the cost evaluators should exchange their assessments of technical deficiencies and weaknesses and their impact on cost to ensure proper adjustments can be made to the proposed costs. This exchange should not be performed until after all the teams complete their initial evaluations in order to avoid intentional or unintentional bias.

2. **Most probable cost (MPC) estimate.** When developing an MPC estimate, consider the following factors:

- The information required for evaluating the realism of the offeror's price estimate is the same information used to develop the government's estimate of the MPC
- Adopt the portion of the offeror's estimate that appears realistic and modify the portion of the estimate that is believed to be unrealistic. For example, one may accept proposed labor hours and adjust the labor rate based on an audit recommendation. Adjustments may increase or decrease cost estimates
- Use relevant estimating tools and techniques
- Conduct meaningful discussions with offerors in the event of any substantial cost adjustments to the offeror's estimated cost
- Clearly document the rationale for any adjustment

APPENDIX G

ONLINE REVERSE AUCTIONS

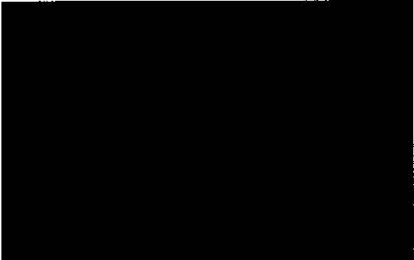
1. **Definition.** A reverse auction, also called "online reverse auction," "e-sourcing," "sourcing event," or "tender", is a type of auction in which the role of the buyer and seller are reversed with the primary objective to drive purchase prices downward. Unlike an ordinary auction, where buyers compete for the right to obtain a good, in a reverse auction, sellers compete for the right to provide a good.

In a reverse auction, a buyer issues a request for quotations to purchase a particular item. Multiple suppliers quote the price at which they are willing to supply the requested item or service. The quoting is performed online using the Internet which results in dynamic real-time bidding. This helps achieve rapid downward pressure on prices that is not normally achieved using the traditional static 3-quote paper-based bidding process.

Buyers and sellers should carefully consider if reverse auctions are appropriate, as there are many issues and problems that can occur. Importantly, the issues and problems are not generally apparent to new users of reverse auctions—so be very careful.

2. **Legality of reverse auctions.** The *Information Technology Management Reform Act* (ITMRA) authorizes the conduct of reverse auctions to obtain the lowest price. The government must not reveal the name of the bidders. Auctions have been determined to be legal and in the spirit of acquisition streamlining, best business practices, and government re-invention initiatives. The government must comply with all procurement regulations and policies.

3. **Applicability to best value acquisitions.** Contracts are typically awarded to the supplier that bid the lowest price. Buyers could also award contracts to suppliers who bid higher prices, depending upon the buyer's specific needs with regards to quality, lead-time, capacity, or other value-adding capabilities. Buyers frequently award contracts to incumbent suppliers, even if prices are higher than the lowest bids, to avoid transition costs.



Reverse auctions may be used for trade-off acquisitions as a pricing tool. For example, once the government finishes technical discussions, it may conduct a reverse auction to establish the offerors' final prices. Provide these prices, along with the rest of the evaluation results, to the SSA for use in selecting the proposal that represents the best value. When using reverse auctions in a best value acquisition, ensure the auction process does not drive prices down to the point that the resulting contract does not provide enough incentive for the contractor to provide quality supplies and services.

Using reverse auctions can be used at different points in an acquisition. For example, the government may use them to achieve the offeror's final price or use them to downsize the number of offerors.

4. **Process.** On-line reverse auctions are conducted using a variety of procedures and automated tools. The contracting officer may contract with an on-line auction service to conduct the reverse

auction or conduct the reverse auction in-house using commercially available software. Two DOD activities offer reverse auction services:

US Army CECOM at <http://abop.monmouth.army.mil> (requires vendor registration)

Naval Supply Systems Command (<http://www.auctions.navy.mil/>)

In either case, conduct the reverse auction on a secure web site and clearly state in the solicitation the ground rules for the auctions, especially when the bidding will open and close.

5. Potential Advantages:

- More bang for the buck due to intense competition
- Reduced acquisition time
- Process is inclusive, transparent, and immediate; industry likes these features

6. Potential Barriers:

- Concern over security and privacy
- Culture—resistance to change
- Lack of trust in the process and government
- Interoperability issues—inability to get applications and legacy systems to work together
- Administrative costs and enabler fees may outweigh price advantages

APPENDIX H DEFINITIONS

Access: Disclosure by permitting a source selection document contained in the source selection record to be viewed but not physically retained by the requester.

Acquisition Planning: The efforts of all stakeholders responsible for an acquisition to satisfy a bona fide need. Acquisition planning is an inherent part of and is conducted throughout the program/project/product lifecycle. It includes developing an overall acquisition strategy for managing the acquisition to include a written acquisition plan.

Amendment: Written revisions made to a document.

Best Value: A comparison of strengths, weaknesses, risk, price, and performance, in accordance with selection criteria, to select the most advantageous offer to the government. Also known as “trade-off”.

Clarification Item: A means of communicating with an offeror for the sole purpose of eliminating apparent clerical errors. A clarification does not give the offeror an opportunity to revise or modify the proposal, except for corrections of apparent clerical errors.

Commercial Item: Any item, other than real property, that of a type customarily used for non-governmental purposes and sold, leased, or licensed to the general public, or any item evolved through advances in technology or performance not yet available in the commercial marketplace, but will be available in the commercial marketplace in time to satisfy the delivery requirements under a government solicitation. Included in this definition are services in support of a commercial item, of a type offered and sold competitively in substantial quantities in the commercial marketplace based on established catalog or market prices for specific tasks performed under standard commercial terms and conditions. This does not include services sold based on hourly rates without an established catalog or market price for a specified service performed.

Competition: An acquisition strategy where more than one offeror is sought to propose on a solicitation with selection of the winner accomplished on the basis of criteria established in the solicitation. Federal law and DOD policy require maximum competition throughout the acquisition life cycle.

Competitive Range: Those proposals determined by the contracting officer to have a reasonable chance of receiving the award from both a technical and a cost standpoint.

Contract: An agreement between two or more legally competent parties, in the proper form, on a legal subject matter or purpose, and for legal consideration.

Contract Modification: Any written change in the terms of a contract.

Contract Types:

Award Fee. A type of incentive contract appropriate when the required supply or service may be acquired at a lower cost by relating the amount of profit or fee payable under the contract to the contractor's performance.

Award Term. An incentive type contract built on the premise that the contract length can be shortened or extended based on attaining or surpassing specified outcomes.

Cost-Reimbursement. A type of contract that provides for payment to the contractor of allowable costs incurred in the performance of the contract, to the extent prescribed in the contract. This type of contract establishes an estimate of total cost for the purpose of obligation of funds and establishing a ceiling that the contractor may not exceed (except at its own risk) without prior approval of or subsequent ratification by the contracting officer.

Firm Fixed-Price. Provides for a price that is not subject to any adjustment on the basis of the contractor's cost experience in performing the contract. This contract type places maximum risk and full responsibility for all costs and resulting profit or loss on the contractor.

Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity. Contract that provides for purchase of an indefinite quantity, within stated limits, of specific supplies or services, during a specified contract period, with deliveries to be scheduled by the timely placement of orders upon the contractor by activities designated either specifically or by class.

Labor-Hour. A variation of the time-and-materials contract, differing only in that the contractor does not supply materials.

Letter or Unfixed Contractual Action. A new procurement action entered into by the government for which contractual terms, specifications, or price is not agreed upon prior to commencing performance.

Level of Effort. A contract for effort of a general or supportive nature that does not require definite end products or results.

Time-and-Materials. A time-and-materials contract provides for acquiring supplies or services on the basis of direct labor hours at specified fixed hourly rates that include wages, overhead, general and administrative expenses, and profit; and materials at cost, including, if appropriate, material handling costs.

Data Item Description (DID). A DD Form 1664 describing the format and content of deliverable data.

Deficiency: A material failure of a proposal to meet a government requirement or a combination of significant weaknesses in a proposal that increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance to an unacceptable level.

Discussion Items (DIs): A descriptive statement that advises an offeror of a proposal response, or lack thereof, that fails to meet a solicitation requirement or does not allow evaluators to continue with the evaluation process.

FedBizOpps: Publication on which the Government publicizes a synopsis to interested vendors.

Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE): An estimate prepared by government personnel which represents the government's best estimate of the cost for goods or services to be performed by the contractor.

Market Research or Survey: Process for gathering data on product characteristics, supplier-capabilities, and the business practices that surrounds them plus an analysis of that data to make acquisition decisions. Market research has two phases: market surveillance and market investigation.

Performance-Based Acquisition (PBA): Structuring all aspects of an acquisition around the goal of describing the needs of the government in terms of outputs and the required quality level or standard of acceptable performance of those outputs and establishing an incentive for the contractor to meet or exceed these performance standards thereby affording the government the greatest value for the taxpayer dollar.

Purchase Request (PR): The authority to obtain supplies or services on behalf of the requirements office. The purchase request contains all the supporting documents required by policy and describes the required supplies or services needed and funding information.

Release: Disclosure by permitting a copy of a source selection document to be physically retained by the requester.

Significant weakness: Flaw that appreciably increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.

Source Selection: The process, by which the government develops and issues a solicitation, receives responses, evaluates those responses, and awards a contract. The term is also used to identify information the disclosure of which would damage the integrity of the process.

Source Selection Advisory Council (SSAC): Senior military or government civilian personnel designated by the Source Selection Authority (SSA) to serve as advisors during the source selection process.

Source Selection Authority (SSA): The official designated to direct the source selection process, approve the SSP, Sections L and M of the solicitation, and select the source(s) for contract award.

Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB): Military or government civilian personnel, representing functional and technical disciplines charged with evaluating proposals and developing summary facts and findings during source selection.

Source Selection Organization (SSO): Representatives from appropriate functional areas such as contracting, technical, logistics, legal, and program management.

Source Selection Plan (SSP): Written plan consisting of two parts. The first part describes the organization and responsibilities of the SSO. The second part identifies the evaluation criteria and detailed procedures for proposal evaluation. The SSA must approve the SSP prior to solicitation release.

Specifications: The technical requirements for items, materials, and services including the procedures by which evaluations will be completed to determine that the requirements are met. Specifications may be unique to a specific program or common to several applications (general in nature).

Strength: Proposed solution to a requirement that provides more than the minimum requirement and represents added value to the government.

Synopsis: Announcement posted to FedBizOpps web site for a pending procurement.

Uncertainty: A condition, event, outcome, or circumstance of which the extent, value, or consequence is unpredictable.

Weakness: Proposed solution that addresses a requirement, but the methodology presented may not provide optimal support service.

APPENDIX I
MARKING OF "SOURCE SELECTION SENSITIVE" INFORMATION
The Follow is an Extract of the Federal Acquisition Regulation

3.104-4 -- Disclosure, Protection, and Marking of Contractor Bid or Proposal Information and Source Selection Information.

(a) Except as specifically provided for in this subsection, no person or other entity may disclose contractor bid or proposal information or source selection information to any person other than a person authorized, in accordance with applicable agency regulations or procedures, by agency head or the contracting officer to receive such information.

(b) Contractor bid or proposal information and source selection information must be protected from unauthorized disclosure in accordance with 14.401, 15.207, applicable law, and agency regulations.

(c) Individuals unsure if particular information is source selection information, as defined in 2.101, should consult with agency officials as necessary. Individuals responsible for preparing material that may be source selection information as described at paragraph (10) of the "source selection information" definition in 2.101 must mark the cover page and each page that the individual believes contains source selection information with the legend

"Source Selection Information -- See FAR 2.101 and 3.104."

Although the information in paragraphs (1) through (9) of the definition in 2.101 is considered to be source selection information whether or not marked, all reasonable efforts must be made to mark such material with the same legend.

(d) Except as provided in subparagraph (d)(3) of this subsection, the contracting officer must notify the contractor in writing if the contracting officer believes that proprietary information, contractor bid or proposal information, or information marked in accordance with 52.215-1(e) has been inappropriately marked. The contractor that has affixed the marking must be given an opportunity to justify the marking.

(1) If the contractor agrees that the marking is not justified, or does not respond within the time specified in the notice, the contracting officer may remove the marking and release the information.

(2) If, after reviewing the contractor's justification, the contracting officer determines that the marking is not justified, the contracting officer must notify the contractor in writing before releasing the information.

(3) For technical data marked as proprietary by a contractor, the contracting officer must follow the procedures in 27.404(h)

(e) This section does not restrict or prohibit --

(1) A contractor from disclosing its own bid or proposal information or the recipient from receiving that information;

(2) The disclosure or receipt of information, not otherwise protected, relating to a Federal agency procurement after it has been canceled by the Federal agency, before contract award, unless the Federal agency plans to resume the procurement;

(3) Individual meetings between a Federal agency official and an offeror or potential offeror for, or a recipient of, a contract or subcontract under a Federal agency procurement, provided that unauthorized disclosure or receipt of contractor bid or proposal information or source selection information does not occur; or

(4) The Government's use of technical data in a manner consistent with the Government's rights in the data.

(f) This section does not authorize –

(1) The withholding of any information pursuant to a proper request from the Congress, any committee or subcommittee thereof, a Federal agency, the Comptroller General, or an Inspector General of a Federal agency, except as otherwise authorized by law or regulation. Any release containing contractor bid or proposal information or source selection information must clearly identify the information as contractor bid or proposal information or source selection information related to the conduct of a Federal agency procurement and notify the recipient that the disclosure of the information is restricted by section 27 of the Act;

(2) The withholding of information from, or restricting its receipt by, the Comptroller General in the course of a protest against the award or proposed award of a Federal agency procurement contract;

(3) The release of information after award of a contract or cancellation of a procurement if such information is contractor bid or proposal information or source selection information which pertains to another procurement; or

(4) The disclosure, solicitation, or receipt of bid or proposal information or source selection information after award if disclosure, solicitation, or receipt is prohibited by law. (See 3.104-2(b)(5) and Subpart 24.2.)

This includes **emails**, working papers, notes, and related documents that discuss, summarize, or analyze the source selection process.

APPENDIX J

BASIC SOURCE SELECTION PROCESS

Phase 1. Presolicitation
Stakeholders identify a bona fide need. The organization with the responsibility and authority to satisfy the need appoints an acquisition manager (AM) ¹ .
The Acquisition Executive appoints a source selection authority (SSA) based upon anticipated cost and agency policy.
The SSA identifies and empowers the source selection origination (SSO).
The AM develops the acquisition plan (AP), if appropriate, with the assistance of the acquisition team members—AE personnel, legal counsel, members of the SSO, or functional specialists.
The AM prepares the work statement(s) and drafts a source selection plan (SSP).
The contracting officer refines the SSP, if appropriate, with substantial assistance from the action officer ² . Other acquisition team members provide assistance as needed.
The SSA approves the SSP.
The contracting officer or specialist enters the SSP (acquisition plan) in Comprizon.Suite initiating the contracting action.
The AM prepares a purchase request (PR) in PRESS. The fully coordinated PR reaches Virginia Contracting Activity.
The contracting officer develops the solicitation in Comprizon.Suite.
Phase 2. Solicitation
The contracting officer controls the solicitation process and serves as the focal point for inquiries from prospective offerors and for the release of information.

The contracting officer issues the solicitation and amendments as needed.

The contracting officer receives proposals and ensures measures to safeguard “acquisition sensitive” information are in place.

Phase 3. Evaluation

The contracting officer controls all exchanges with offeror(s) after receipt of proposal(s).

The SSA advises the SSEB of its roles and responsibilities.

The source selection evaluation board evaluates proposals IAW the SSP and the solicitation.

The contracting officer conducts clarifications and discussions as needed.

The source selection advisory council prepares and submits a report to the SSA of the results of the evaluation process.

Phase 4. Selection and Award

The SSA selects the winning offer or rejects all offers.

The contracting officer performs a pre-award survey, prepares award documents, and obtains a legal review of the award package.

The contracting officer signs the contract, notifies the successful and unsuccessful offerors, and distributes documentation.

The contracting officer debriefs unsuccessful offers, upon request, with the assistance of the action officer if needed.

Notes:

1. The AM can be a program or project manager, the customer (end user).
2. In general, the AM is the most knowledgeable member of the team with respect to program requirements and desired outcomes. The challenge for the acquisition team is to develop an SSP that meets all of the legal requirements while efficaciously meeting customer needs.

APPENDIX K

PROPOSAL EVALUATION RESPONSIBILITIES

The Source Selection Authority (SSA). The SSA is responsible for the proper and efficient conduct of the entire source selection. The SSA is responsible for appointing the SSAC chair, approving appointment of the SSAC members, SSEB chair, and SSEB members. The SSAC chair or the contracting officer prepares the appointment and approval memoranda. Specifically, the SSA:

- Reviews and approves the Source Selection Plan (SSP) and Sections L and M of the solicitation prior to solicitation release to ensure consistency among solicitation requirements, notices to offerors, proposal preparation instructions, evaluation factors, subfactors and elements, solicitation provisions or contract clauses, and data requirements
- Reviews and considers recommendations in the SSAC report. Makes the final selection decision of the offeror(s) whose proposal represents the best value to the government and ensures the source selection decision (SSD) memorandum explains the rationale for the decision. Signs the SSD memorandum. The SSA may reject all proposals received in response to a solicitation if doing so is in the best interest of the government.
- Approves the competitive range determination received from the contracting officer
- Maintains complete copies of the SSP and the solicitation. These documents will be considered as the master copies and will be used for the source selection evaluation. The contracting officer will maintain identical copies as part of the contract file.

Source Selection Advisory Council (SSAC). The SSAC functions as an advisory council to the SSA for the source selection process, and prepares the comparative analysis of the evaluation results. The SSAC chair is responsible for the proper and efficient operation of the SSAC in its advisory role. Specifically, the SSAC chair:

- Nominates SSAC members to the SSA if not otherwise appointed
- Nominates the SSEB chair to the SSA if not otherwise appointed
- Convenes and chairs SSAC meetings
- Prepares the SSAC report and forwards it to the SSA. The SSAC report incorporates the SSEB chair's report and provides a summary of each proposal in the competitive range, with comparative analyses of both cost and non-cost factors; a discussion of the overall impact of significant risks associated with each proposal in the competitive range; and a summary of issues considered significant to the SSA's decision
- Prepares the SSD memorandum for the SSA's signature
- Plans and coordinates the times and dates for key SSA and SSAC meetings

Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB).

SSEB chair. The SSEB chair is responsible for all activities necessary to conduct and document the source selection evaluation process. The SSEB chair:

- Provides leadership and administrative services for the evaluation team, and ensures adherence to all security requirements described in the SSP
- Nominates the team leaders and members for the Past Performance, Technical and Management Approach, and Cost and Price Teams to the SSA
- Prepares the appointment and approval memoranda

SSEB Team Organization.

- The SSEB is comprised of personnel from across the government with the appropriate functional and technical skills necessary to provide a complete and balanced evaluation of the offerors' proposals. The SSEB is normally comprised of three teams:
 - Past Performance Team.
 - Technical and Management Approach Team.
 - Cost and Price Team.
- Each team leader is responsible for evaluating the relevant portions of each proposal and documenting the team findings for the SSEB Evaluation Report. Team leaders function as evaluators and voting members for their respective teams.
- The SSEB team evaluates all proposals and reports its findings to the SSEB chair. The team provides additional information to the SSAC through the SSEB chair as requested. Each team:
 - Conducts a complete review, validation, and evaluation of each proposal against the approved evaluation criteria
 - Prepares and submits to the SSAC chair, an SSEB Evaluation Report of the initial and final evaluations against the criteria stated in Section M of the solicitation
 - Provides briefings and consultations concerning the evaluation as required by the SSAC
- If award without discussions is not possible, supports the SSAC and contracting officer during discussions

Acquisition Manager (AM) and Program Manager (PM). The PM or AM sponsors the acquisition requirement and may be the SSAC chair. The AM or PM

- Articulates the requirement in the acquisition package
- Prepares and coordinates the acquisition package:
 - SSA appointment memorandum
 - Acquisition Plan (AP)
 - Work Statement or Statement of Objectives (SOO)
 - Source Selection Plan
 - Independent Government Cost Estimate
- Performs market research
- Evaluates existing DIA and DOD contracts for use

- Seeks opportunities for small businesses
- Assists the contracting officer in developing the solicitation
- Manages the acquisition integrated process team (IPT)

Contracting Officer. The contracting officer is the only legal agent of the government with respect to the contract functions. The contracting officer ensures performance of all necessary actions for effective contracting. The contracting officer:

- Prepares the solicitation, ensuring inclusion of all clauses required by law, regulation, and agency requirements
- Prepares Section L instructions to guide offerors in preparing proposals, including proposal organization, and format
- Prepares Section M information identifying all significant factors and subfactors that the government will evaluate in awarding a contract and their relative importance
- Issues solicitations to potential sources
- Amends solicitations as needed
- Serves as the focal point for inquiries from actual or prospective offerors after release of solicitation
- Controls exchanges with offerors after receipt of proposals
- Ensures offerors receive impartial, fair, and equitable treatment
- Maintains complete copies of the SSP, the AP, and solicitation, as part of the contract file. These documents must be the identical to those maintained by the SSA
- Develops the competitive range determination
- Provides business advice to the SSA, the SSAC, and the SSEB
- Awards the contract(s)
- Debriefs unsuccessful offerors
- Prepares notice of award