

The Top 10 Mistakes of RFP Preparation

Presented by

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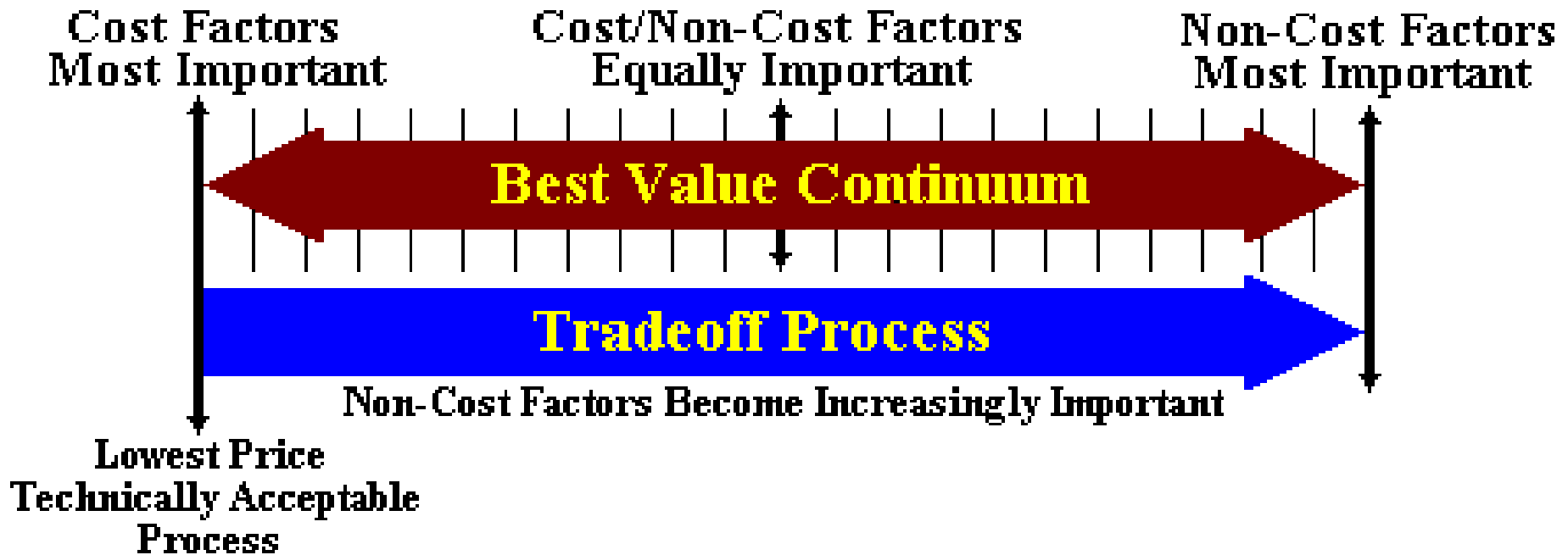
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What we'll cover

- Review of the basics of proposals
 - ▶ Review of trade off – what is it?
 - ▶ Top 10 run down
 - Not necessarily in order from least to most important...

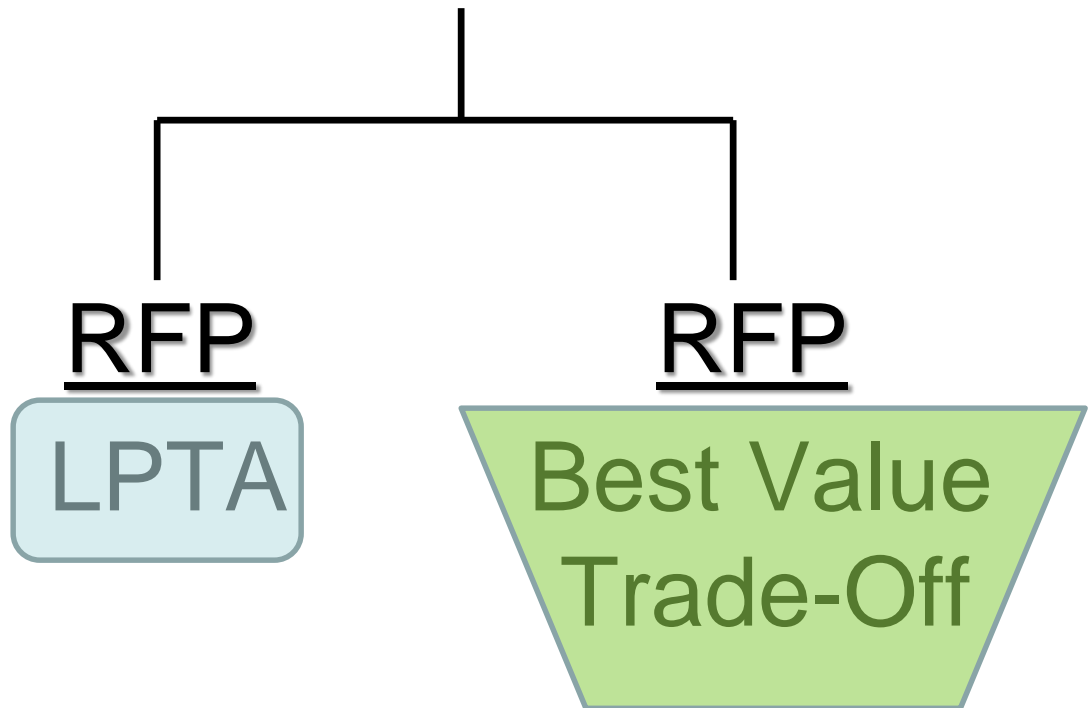
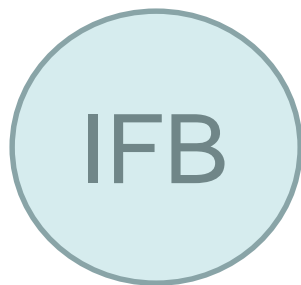






The Basics – Acquisition Decisions

Best Value Continuum





[Request for Proposal \(RFP\), cont'd](#)

■ Trade Off Process

- ▶ Award is made to highest rated offeror, price and non-price factors included, that results in Best Value to the Govt.
- ▶ Time permits.
- ▶ Evaluation Factors clearly defined in RFP/relative importance to price is clearly stated.
- ▶ Permits different approaches from offerors – generally a performance “spec.”
- ▶ Discussions may/may not be conducted.
- ▶ Competitive range determination/ FPR allowed.





1. Not Being Ready

- **Experience, skill sets** – *know your capability, don't guess.*
- **Business acumen** – *Federal work is complicated with lots of red tape.*
- **Attitude & assumptions** – *the Government owes you the opportunity to participate in Federal procurements. It doesn't "owe" you a contract.*
- **Education / knowledge** – *get as much education about Federal contracting as you can. Know how the agency you want to do business with does it's contracting. Know their "language" – "Corps-speak" is different from "Air Force-speak."*
- **Market Research** – *who buys what you sell? Stop wasting time; concentrate on only those Agencies that match your business lines.*
- **Wanting it all...***must be willing to start small or be a subcontractor.*
- **Choosing the right partners** *for successful performance and not getting used as a pass-thru for your status or getting caught in a bad deal for you.*
- **Financial Planning** – *floating multiple contracts.*





2. Not Reading/Understanding the RFP

- Read *the whole thing* more than once.
- Get someone else to read *the whole thing*.
- Look up all the clauses – they can change as new laws are enacted. (example – “Limitations on Subcontracting” has changed...)
- Don’t make assumptions based on a previous procurement...
- Make a checklist identifying—
 - *Evaluation factors & points to hit*
 - *Submission requirements – formatting, page limits, etc*
 - *Check all off as you do them – then have someone else look at it...*





3. Not Following RFP Instructions

- **Not demonstrating in sufficient detail that you are hitting all points in the technical requirement.** *Evaluators should not have to make a huge leap to decipher your intent.*
- **Not complying with formatting requirements** - *page limitations, layout, volume content, skipping sections or required information, errors, etc.*
 - **Whatever you send must clearly illustrate that you meet the technical qualifications for the work. Extra pages will not be evaluated.**
- **Delivery of your proposal** – *You must deliver to the office identified in the RFP. It must be in the “bid box” by the date/time designated or it’s LATE. No electronic submission unless RFP allows it.*
- **Not acknowledging amendments**





4. Consistency across tables, exhibits & other information

- Math errors across tables & exhibits.
- Inconsistent data contained in one table that supports another in the proposal. Ex: one table has 6 elements to show xyz, but in another section, xyz shows 7 elements.
- Not following examples furnished on how to complete a section
- Making the mistake of assuming you will get a chance to “fix it” in the final proposal revision. “It’s good enough for now” mentality.
- Consistency in transferring info to Final Proposal Revision. Forgetting to update figures & tables to agree with changes made in the verbiage.





5. Not Asking Questions

- Submit in writing by date specified.
- Not attending the pre-bid meeting, industry day, or site visit. Your chance to verify what the project entails. You'll be stuck with your assumptions, which could be faulty.
- READ all the answers posted and make sure your proposal covers those. *Don't expect to be given specific instructions – answers will be specific to a point and/or direct you to relevant solicitation provision or clause/section.*
- Point out exact reference area of solicitation and state the question or discrepancy in clear, concise terms. *If a contradiction exists, point out that as well, noting the reference pages & paragraphs.*
- **ACKNOWLEDGE AMENDMENTS** resulting from the RFI's posted. **These are “material” and could result in you being classified as non-responsive!**





6. Underestimating Resources / Capabilities

- **What you price now cannot be changed after award** – *even if you underestimated resources. What's the worst case & what's the plan if that happens?*
- **Can you REALLY do this work?** *What happens if I lose my primary subcontractor? Can I continue?*
- **Do you have enough people assigned to work the contract?** *If you've doubled-up on positions, does the contract allow that?*
- **How much do you need to subcontract because you don't have the capability in-house?** *Are you in compliance with clauses requiring minimum percentages of self – performance?*
- **How labor laws (minimum wages) affect pricing, work plan, etc.** *Have you classified your employees correctly and are you paying them the right wage? (e.g. Service Contract Act, Davis-Bacon Act)*





7. Frontloading / Unbalanced / Unrealistic Pricing

- **Allocating costs to inappropriate pool** – *may affect O/H rate.*
- **Including costs not allowable** (*familiarity with FAR Part 31*)
- **Shifting costs to 1st year under option year contracts or shifting costs to other line items** *to get paid for investment items upfront.*
- **Deliberately under pricing so you will get the award.**
- **Double accounting** – *costs included (duplicated) in more than one line item or in more than one contract...*
- **Including “contingency” costs** *for those “just in case” scenarios*
- **Unrealistic profit percentage** *for low percent of self-performance.*
- **Not explaining in your proposal why you did what you did.**
If you must include a cost that makes your pricing look unbalanced, explain why.





8. Too Much Subcontracting!

- **Not in compliance with clauses requiring minimum percentages of self – performance.** (e.g. “*Limitation on Subcontracting,*” “*Performance of Work by the Contractor,*” *Notice of Price Evaluation Preference for HUBZone Small Business Concerns*” clauses)
- **Overly reliant on another company’s resources, expertise, etc.** *Increased risk of failure. Risk of Affiliation.*
- **Taking on work outside of your capabilities** *and passing it on to another company just to get your foot in the door.*
- **Getting involved in teaming solely for size status.** *Pass-throughs!*
- **Higher costs** – *hard to be competitive if most is subcontracted out – affects price, management, billing, coordination amongst subs, etc. Increased risk of failure.*





9. Assuming You Get A Second Chance

- **Assuming you will get to negotiate and revise based on a better understanding of what is involved once you get through the first round.** *“Good enough” isn’t good enough.*
- **Counting on Discussions.** *Trade-Offs can be held without discussions – don’t count on being able to “explain” your proposal*
- **Submitting a “boilerplate” proposal used before.** *A one-size-fits-all approach is a bad decision.*
- **Not treating a proposal as if it’s the final offer and price.** If you don’t have enough time to do it right the first time, you may not get the opportunity to do it over.





10. Incomplete – Irrelevant Past Performance

- **Assuming Past Performance is same as Experience** – *not the same*
Experience = I have done it **Past Performance = I did it well**
- **Not sending the specified information** – *send what it calls for – (e.g. 3 projects completed in last 5 yrs), copies of eSRS reports, etc.*
- **Sending information only on prime contracts held by your company.** *If you were a major subcontractor – include it, if relevant.*
- **Not admitting you don't have relevant past performance** – *don't try to fake it.*
- **Taking credit where it doesn't belong.** Trying to “claim” credit for past performance where you were not the prime or on a teaming arrangement that was instrumental in doing the work.

