Subpart 2009.5 - Organizational Conflicts of Interest

Parent topic: PART 2009 - CONTRACTOR QUALIFICATIONS

2009.500 Scope of subpart.

In accordance with 42 U.S.C. 2210a., NRC acquisitions are processed in accordance with 2009.570, which takes precedence over FAR 9.5 with respect to organizational conflicts of interest. Where non-conflicting guidance appears in FAR 9.5, that guidance must be followed.

2009.570 NRC organizational conflicts of interest.

2009.570-1 Scope of policy.

(a) It is the policy of NRC to avoid, eliminate, or neutralize contractor organizational conflicts of interest. The NRC achieves this objective by requiring all prospective contractors to submit information describing relationships, if any, with organizations or persons (including those regulated by the NRC) which may give rise to actual or potential conflicts of interest in the event of contract award.

(b) Contractor conflict of interest determinations cannot be made automatically or routinely. The application of sound judgment on virtually a case-by-case basis is necessary if the policy is to be applied to satisfy the overall public interest. It is not possible to prescribe in advance a specific method or set of criteria which would serve to identify and resolve all of the contractor conflict of interest situations that might arise. However, examples are provided in the regulations in this chapter to guide application of this policy guidance. The ultimate test is as follows: Might the contractor, if awarded the contract, be placed in a position where its judgment may be biased, or where it may have an unfair competitive advantage?

(c) The conflict of interest rule contained in this subpart applies to contractors and offerors only. Individuals or firms who have other relationships with the NRC (e.g., parties to a licensing proceeding) are not covered by the regulations in this chapter. This rule does not apply to the acquisition of consulting services through the personnel appointment process. NRC agreements with other Govern ment agencies, international organizations, or state, local, or foreign Governments. Separate procedures for avoiding conflicts of interest will be employed in these agreements, as appropriate.

2009.570-2 Definitions.

Affiliates means business concerns which are affiliates of each other when either directly or indirectly one concern or individual controls or has the power to control another, or when a third party controls or has the power to control both.

Contract means any contractual agreement or other arrangement with the NRC except as provided in 2009.570-1(c).

Contractor means any person, firm, unincorporated association, joint venture, co-sponsor, partnership, corporation, affiliates thereof, or their successors in interest, including their chief executives, directors, key personnel (identified in the contract), proposed consultants or subcontractors, which are a party to a contract with the NRC.

Evaluation activities means any effort involving the appraisal of a technology, process, product, or policy.

Offeror or *prospective contractor* means any person, firm, unincorporated association, joint venture, co-sponsor, partnership, corporation, or their affiliates or successors in interest, including their chief executives, directors, key personnel, proposed consultants, or subcontractors, submitting a bid or proposal, solicited or unsolicited, to the NRC to obtain a contract.

Organizational conflicts of interest means that a relationship exists whereby a contractor or prospective contractor has present or planned interests related to the work to be performed under an NRC contract which:

(1) May diminish its capacity to give impartial, technically sound, objective assistance and advice, or may otherwise result in a biased work product; or

(2) May result in its being given an unfair competitive advantage.

Potential conflict of interest means that a factual situation exists that suggests that an actual conflict of interest may arise from award of a proposed contract. The term *potential conflict of interest* is used to signify those situations that -

(1) Merit investigation before contract award to ascertain whether award would give rise to an actual conflict; or

(2) Must be reported to the contracting officer for investigation if they arise during contract performance.

Research means any scientific or technical work involving theoretical analysis, exploration, or experimentation.

Subcontractor means any subcontractor of any tier who performs work under a contract with the NRC except subcontracts for supplies and subcontracts in amounts not exceeding $10,000.

Technical consulting and management support services means internal assistance to a component of the NRC in the formulation or administration of its programs, projects, or policies which normally require that the contractor be given access to proprietary information or to information that has not been made available to the public. These services typically include assistance in the preparation of program plans, preliminary designs, specifications, or statements of work.

2009.570-3 Criteria for recognizing contractor

organizational conflicts of interest.

(a) *General.*

(1) Two questions will be asked in determining whether actual or potential organizational conflicts of interest exist:

(i) Are there conflicting roles which might bias an offeror's or contractor's judgment in relation to its work for the NRC?

(ii) May the offeror or contractor be given an unfair competitive advantage based on the performance of the contract?

(2) NRC's ultimate determination that organizational conflicts of interest exist will be made in light of common sense and good business judgment based upon the relevant facts. While it is difficult to identify and to prescribe in advance a specific method for avoiding all of the various situations or relationships that might involve potential organizational conflicts of interest, NRC personnel will pay particular attention to proposed contractual requirements that call for the rendering of advice, consultation or evaluation activities, or similar activities that directly lay the groundwork for the NRC's decisions on regulatory activities, future procurements, and research programs. Any work performed at an applicant or licensee site will also be closely scrutinized by the NRC staff.

(b) *Situations or relationships.* The following situations or relationships may give rise to organizational conflicts of interest:

(1) The offeror or contractor shall disclose information that may give rise to organizational conflicts of interest under the following circumstances. The information may include the scope of work or specification for the requirement being performed, the period of performance, and the name and telephone number for a point of contact at the organization knowledgeable about the commercial contract.

(i) Where the offeror or contractor provides advice and recommendations to the NRC in the same technical area where it is also providing consulting assistance to any organization regulated by the NRC.

(ii) Where the offeror or contractor provides advice to the NRC on the same or similar matter on which it is also providing assistance to any organization regulated by the NRC.

(iii) Where the offeror or contractor evaluates its own products or services, or has been substantially involved in the development or marketing of the products or services of another entity.

(iv) Where the award of a contract would result in placing the offeror or contractor in a conflicting role in which its judgment may be biased in relation to its work for the NRC, or would result in an unfair competitive advantage for the offeror or contractor.

(v) Where the offeror or contractor solicits or performs work at an applicant or licensee site while performing work in the same technical area for the NRC at the same site.

(2) The contracting officer may request specific information from an offeror or contractor or may require special contract clauses such as provided in 2009.570-5(b) in the following circumstances:

(i) Where the offeror or contractor prepares specifications that are to be used in competitive

procurements of products or services covered by the specifications.

(ii) Where the offeror or contractor prepares plans for specific approaches or methodologies that are to be incorporated into competitive procurements using the approaches or methodologies.

(iii) Where the offeror or contractor is granted access to information not available to the public concerning NRC plans, policies, or programs that could form the basis for a later procurement action.

(iv) Where the offeror or contractor is granted access to proprietary information of its competitors.

(v) Where the award of a contract might result in placing the offeror or contractor in a conflicting role in which its judgment may be biased in relation to its work for the NRC or might result in an unfair competitive advantage for the offeror or contractor.

(c) *Policy application guidance.* The following examples are illustrative only and are not intended to identify and resolve all contractor organizational conflict of interest situations.

(1)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp., in response to a Request For Proposal (RFP), proposes to undertake certain analyses of a reactor component as called for in the RFP. The ABC Corp. is one of several companies considered to be technically well qualified. In response to the inquiry in the RFP, the ABC Corp. advises that it is currently performing similar analyses for the reactor manufacturer.

(ii) *Guidance.* An NRC contract for that particular work normally would not be awarded to the ABC Corp. because the company would be placed in a position in which its judgment could be biased in relationship to its work for the NRC. Because there are other well-qualified companies available, there would be no reason for considering a waiver of the policy.

(2)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp., in response to an RFP, proposes to perform certain analyses of a reactor component that is unique to one type of advanced reactor. As is the case with other technically qualified companies responding to the RFP, the ABC Corp. is performing various projects for several different utility clients. None of the ABC Corp. projects have any relationship to the work called for in the RFP. Based on the NRC evaluation, the ABC Corp. is considered to be the best qualified company to perform the work outlined in the RFP.

(ii) *Guidance.* An NRC contract normally could be awarded to the ABC Corp. because no conflict of interest exists which could motivate bias with respect to the work. An appropriate clause would be included in the contract to preclude the ABC Corp. from subsequently contracting for work with the private sector that could create a conflict during the performance of the NRC contract. For example, ABC Corp. would be precluded from the performance of similar work for the company developing the advanced reactor mentioned in the example.

(3)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp., in response to a competitive RFP, submits a proposal to assist the NRC in revising NRC's guidance documents on the respiratory protection requirements of 10 CFR part 20. ABC Corp. is the only firm determined to be technically acceptable. ABC Corp. has performed substantial work for regulated utilities in the past and is expected to continue similar efforts in the future. The work has and will cover the writing, implementation, and administration of compliance

respiratory protection programs for nuclear power plants.

(ii) *Guidance.* This situation would place the firm in a role where its judgment could be biased in relationship to its work for the NRC. Because the nature of the required work is vitally important in terms of the NRC's responsibilities and no reasonable alternative exists, a waiver of the policy, in accordance with 2009.570-9 may be warranted. Any waiver must be fully documented in accordance with the waiver provisions of this policy with particular attention to the establishment of protective mechanisms to guard against bias.

(4)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp. submits a proposal for a new system to evaluate a specific reactor component's performance for the purpose of developing standards that are important to the NRC program. The ABC Corp. has advised the NRC that it intends to sell the new system to industry once its practicability has been demonstrated. Other companies in this business are using older systems for evaluation of the specific reactor component.

(ii) *Guidance.* A contract could be awarded to the ABC Corp. if the contract stipulates that no information produced under the contract will be used in the contractor's private activities unless this information has been reported to the NRC. Data on how the reactor component performs, which is reported to the NRC by contractors, will normally be disseminated by the NRC to others to preclude an unfair competitive advantage. When the NRC furnishes information about the reactor component to the contractor for the performance of contracted work, the information may not be used in the contractor's private activities unless the information is generally available to others. Further, the contract will stipulate that the contractor will inform the NRC contracting officer of all situations in which the information, developed about the performance of the reactor component under the contract, is proposed to be used.

(5)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp., in response to a RFP, proposes to assemble a map showing certain seismological features of the Appalachian fold belt. In accordance with the representation in the RFP and 2009.570-3(b)(1)(i), ABC Corp. informs the NRC that it is presently doing seismological studies for several utilities in the eastern United States, but none of the sites are within the geographic area contemplated by the NRC study.

(ii) *Guidance.* The contracting officer would normally conclude that award of a contract would not place ABC Corp. in a conflicting role where its judgment might be biased. Section 2052.209-72(c) Work for Others, would preclude ABC Corp. from accepting work which could create a conflict of interest during the term of the NRC contract.

(6)

(i) *Example.* AD Division of ABC Corp., in response to a RFP, submits a proposal to assist the NRC in the safety and environmental review of applications for licenses for the construction, operation, and decommissioning of fuel cycle facilities. ABC Corp. is divided into two separate and distinct divisions, AD and BC. The BC Division performs the same or similar services for industry. The BC Division is currently providing the same or similar services required under the NRC's contract for an applicant or licensee.

(ii) *Guidance.* An NRC contract for that particular work would not be awarded to the ABC Corp. The AD Division could be placed in a position to pass judgment on work performed by the BC Division, which could bias its work for NRC. Further, the Conflict of Interest provisions apply to ABC Corp.

and not to separate or distinct divisions within the company. If no reasonable alternative exists, a waiver of the policy could be sought in accordance with 2009.570-9.

(7)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp. completes an analysis for NRC of steam generator tube leaks at one of a utility's six sites. Three months later, ABC Corp. is asked by this utility to perform the same analysis at another of its sites.

(ii) *Guidance.* Section 2052.290-72(c)(3) would prohibit the contractor from beginning this work for the utility until one year after completion of the NRC work at the first site.

(8)

(i) *Example.* ABC Corp. is assisting NRC in a major on-site analysis of a utility's redesign of the common areas between its twin reactors. The contract is for two years with an estimated value of $5 million. Near the completion of the NRC work, ABC Corp. requests authority to solicit for a $100K contract with the same utility to transport spent fuel to a disposal site. ABC Corp. is performing no other work for the utility.

(ii) *Guidance.* The Contracting Officer would allow the contractor to proceed with the solicitation because it is not in the same technical area as the NRC work; and the potential for technical bias by the contractor because of financial ties to the utility is slight due to the relative value of the two contracts.

(9)

(i) *Example.* The ABC Corp. is constructing a turbine building and installing new turbines at a reactor site. The contract with the utility is for five years and has a total value of $100 million. ABC Corp. has responded to an NRC Request For Proposal requiring the contractor to participate in a major team inspection unrelated to the turbine work at the same site. The estimated value of the contract is $75K.

(ii) *Guidance.* An NRC contract would not normally be awarded to ABC Corp. because these factors create the potential for financial loyalty to the utility that may bias the technical judgment of the contractor.

(d) *Other considerations.*

(1) The fact that the NRC can identify and later avoid, eliminate, or neutralize any potential organizational conflicts arising from the performance of a contract is not relevant to a determination of the existence of conflicts prior to the award of a contract.

(2) It is not relevant that the contractor has the professional reputation of being able to resist temptations which arise from organizational conflicts of interest, or that a follow-on procurement is not involved, or that a contract is awarded on a competitive or a sole source basis.

2009.570-4 Representation.

(a) The following procedures are designed to assist the NRC contracting officer in determining whether situations or relationships exist which may constitute organizational conflicts of interest

with respect to a particular offeror or contractor. The procedures apply to small purchases meeting the criteria stated in the following paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) The organizational conflicts of interest representation provision at 2052.209-71 must be included in solicitations and contracts resulting from unsolicited proposals. The contracting officer must also include this provision for task orders and contract modifications for new work for:

(1) Evaluation services or activities;

(2) Technical consulting and management support services;

(3) Research; and

(4) Other contractual situations where special organizational conflicts of interest provisions are noted in the solicitation and would be included in the resulting contract. This representation requirement also applies to all modifications for additional effort under the contract except those issued under the “Changes” clause. Where, however, a statement of the type required by the organizational conflicts of interest representation provisions has previously been submitted with regard to the contract being modified, only an updating of the statement is required.

(c) The offeror may, because of actual or potential organizational conflicts of interest, propose to exclude specific kinds of work contained in a RFP unless the RFP specifically prohibits the exclusion. Any such proposed exclusion by an offeror will be considered by the NRC in the evaluation of proposals. If the NRC considers the proposed excluded work to be an essential or integral part of the required work and its exclusion would be to the detriment of the competitive posture of the other offerors, the NRC shall reject the proposal as unacceptable.

(d) The offeror's failure to execute the representation required by paragraph (b) of this section with respect to an invitation for bids is considered to be a minor informality. The offeror will be permitted to correct the omission.

2009.570-5 Contract clauses.

(a) *General contract clause.* All contracts and simplified acquisitions of the types set forth in 2009.570-4(b) must include the clause entitled, “Contractor Organizational Conflicts of Interest,” set forth in 2052.209-72.

(b) *Other special contract clauses.* If it is determined from the nature of the proposed contract that an organizational conflict of interest exists, the contracting officer may determine that the conflict can be avoided, or, after obtaining a waiver in accordance with 2009.570-9, neutralized through the use of an appropriate special contract clause. If appropriate, the offeror may negotiate the terms and conditions of these clauses, including the extent and time period of any restriction. These clauses include but are not limited to:

(1) Hardware exclusion clauses which prohibit the acceptance of production contracts following a related non-production contract previously performed by the contractor;

(2) Software exclusion clauses;

(3) Clauses which require the contractor (and certain of its key personnel) to avoid certain organizational conflicts of interest; and

(4) Clauses which provide for protection of confidential data and guard against its unauthorized use.

2009.570-6 Evaluation, findings, and contract award.

The contracting officer shall evaluate all relevant facts submitted by an offeror and other relevant information. After evaluating this information against the criteria of 2009.570-3, the contracting officer shall make a finding of whether organizational conflicts of interest exist with respect to a particular offeror. If it has been determined that real or potential conflicts of interest exist, the contracting officer shall:

(a) Disqualify the offeror from award;

(b) Avoid or eliminate such conflicts by appropriate measures; or

(c) Award the contract under the waiver provision of 2009.570-9.

2009.570-7 Conflicts identified after award.

If potential organizational conflicts of interest are identified after award with respect to a particular contractor and the contracting officer determines that conflicts do exist and that it would not be in the best interest of the Government to terminate the contract, as provided in the clauses required by 2009.570-5, the contracting officer shall take every reasonable action to avoid, eliminate, or, after obtaining a waiver in accordance with 2009.570-9, neutralize the effects of the identified conflict.

2009.570-8 Subcontracts.

The contracting officer shall require offerors and contractors to submit a representation statement from all subcontractors (other than a supply subcontractor) and consultants performing services in excess of $10,000 in accordance with 2009.570-4(b). The contracting officer shall require the contractor to include contract clauses in accordance with 2009.570-5 in consultant agreements or subcontracts involving performance of work under a prime contract.

2009.570-9 Waiver.

(a) The contracting officer determines the need to seek a waiver for specific contract awards with the advice and concurrence of the program office director and legal counsel. Upon the recommendation of the Senior Procurement Executive, and after consultation with legal counsel, the Executive Director for Operations may waive the policy in specific cases if he determines that it is in the best interest of the United States to do so.

(b) Waiver action is strictly limited to those situations in which:

(1) The work to be performed under contract is vital to the NRC program;

(2) The work cannot be satisfactorily performed except by a contractor whose interests give rise to a question of conflict of interest.

(3) Contractual and/or technical review and surveillance methods can be employed by the NRC to neutralize the conflict.

(c) The justification and approval documents for any waivers must be placed in the NRC Public Document Room.

2009.570-10 Remedies.

In addition to other remedies permitted by law or contract for a breach of the restrictions in this subpart or for any intentional misrepresentation or intentional nondisclosure of any relevant interest required to be provided for this section, the NRC may debar the contractor from subsequent NRC contracts.