14.503-1 Step one.

(a) Requests for technical proposals *shall* be synopsized in accordance with part 5. The request *must* include, as a minimum, the following:

(1) A description of the *supplies* or services required.

(2) A statement of intent to use the two-step method.

(3) The requirements of the technical proposal.

(4) The evaluation criteria, to include all factors and any significant subfactors.

(5) A statement that the technical proposals *shall* not include prices or *pricing* information.

(6) The date, or date and hour, by which the proposal *must* be received (see 14.201-6(r)).

(7) A statement that-

(i) In the second step, only bids based upon technical proposals determined to be acceptable, either initially or as a result of discussions, will be considered for awards, and

(ii) Each bid in the second step *must* be based on the bidder's own technical proposals.

(8) A statement that-

(i) *Offerors should* submit proposals that are acceptable without additional explanation or information,

(ii) The Government *may* make a final determination regarding a proposal's acceptability solely on the basis of the proposal as submitted; and

(iii) The Government *may* proceed with the second step without requesting further information from any *offeror*; however, the Government *may* request additional information from *offerors* of proposals that it considers reasonably susceptible of being made acceptable, and *may* discuss proposals with their *offerors*.

(9) A statement that a notice of unacceptability will be forwarded to the *offeror* upon completion of the proposal evaluation and final determination of unacceptability.

(10) A statement either that only one technical proposal *may* be submitted by each *offeror* or that multiple technical proposals *may* be submitted. When specifications permit different technical approaches, it is generally in the Government's interest to authorize multiple proposals. If multiple proposals are authorized, see 14.201-6(s).

(b) Information on delivery or performance requirements *may* be of assistance to bidders in determining whether or not to submit a proposal and *may* be included in the request. The request *shall* also indicate that the information is not binding on the Government and that the actual delivery or performance requirements will be contained in the invitation issued under step two.

(c) Upon receipt, the *contracting officer shall*-

(1) Safeguard proposals against disclosure to unauthorized persons;

(2) Accept and handle data marked in accordance with 15.609 as provided in that section; and

(3) Remove any reference to price or cost.

(d) The *contracting officer shall* establish a time period for evaluating technical proposals. The period *may* vary with the complexity and number of proposals involved. However, the evaluation *should* be completed quickly.

(e)

(1) Evaluations *shall* be based on the criteria in the request for proposals but not consideration of responsibility as defined in 9.1, Proposals, *shall* be categorized as-

(i) Acceptable;

(ii) Reasonably susceptible of being made acceptable; or

(iii) Unacceptable.

(2) Any proposal which modifies, or fails to conform to the essential requirements or specifications of, the request for technical proposals *shall* be considered nonresponsive and categorized as unacceptable.

(f)

(1) The *contracting officer may* proceed directly with step two if there are sufficient acceptable proposals to ensure adequate price competition under step two, and if further time, effort and delay to make additional proposals acceptable and thereby increase competition would not be in the Government's interest. If this is not the case, the *contracting officer shall* request bidders whose proposals *may* be made acceptable to submit additional clarifying or supplementing information. The *contracting office shall* identify the nature of the deficiencies in the proposal or the nature of the additional information required. The *contracting officer may* also arrange discussions for this purpose. No proposal *shall* be discussed with any *offeror* other than the submitter.

(2) In initiating requests for additional information, the *contracting officer shall* fix an appropriate time for bidders to conclude discussions, if any, submit all additional information, and incorporate such additional information as part of their proposals submitted. Such time *may* be extended in the discretion of the *contracting officer*. If the additional information incorporated as part of a proposal within the final time fixed by the *contracting officer* establishes that the proposal is acceptable, it *shall* be so categorized. Otherwise, it *shall* be categorized as unacceptable.

(g) When a technical proposal is found unacceptable (either initially or after clarification), the *contracting officer shall* promptly notify the *offeror* of the basis of the determination and that a revision of the proposal will not be considered. Upon written request, the *contracting officer shall* debrief unsuccessful *offerors* (see 15.505 and 15.506).

(h) Late technical proposals are governed by 15.208(b), (c), and (f).

(i) If it is necessary to discontinue two-step sealed bidding, the *contracting officer shall* include a statement of the facts and circumstances in the contract file. Each *offeror shall* be notified *in*

writing. When step one results in no acceptable technical proposal or only one acceptable technical proposal, the *acquisition may* be continued by negotiation.

Parent topic: 14.503 Procedures.