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Request for Proposal (RFP) Evaluation Criteria



Background

Have you seen this type of scoring difference in any of your Selection Committee Meetings? Our Contract Oversight unit follows a variety of RFPs for municipalities and County departments in order to insure that the entity's policies and procedures are followed. As a result of that work, we have found instances in which improvements can be made, in evaluation criteria and the ways in which they are used. It is important for all competitive procurements that the process be thorough, open and transparent, but it is especially important for high cost procurements.

Information

Evaluation criteria should evaluate the proposer's adherence to all material included in the RFP with respect to the requirements, including all form and substance.¹ With proper weighting and identification of evaluation criteria along with consensus by the members of the Selection Committee an evaluation plan is developed with a common standard by which to judge the merit of competing proposals.²

Effective criteria offer all respondents a fair and equitable method of having their proposal reviewed and considered in a consistent and similar manner as their competitors. They also provide members of the Selection Committee a clear and

¹ Public Procurement Practice, "Developing Evaluation Criteria", National Institute of Government Procurement (NIGP), Global Best Practice, <http://www.nigp.org>

² North Carolina Office of Information Technology Services, Statewide Information Technology Procurement Office, "Establishing Effective Evaluation Criteria and an Effective Scoring Method", www.its.state.nc.us/itprocurement/

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concise method to identify the competent proposers and allow the entity to rank the proposals and finally select the best value.

Effective evaluation criteria should have the following characteristics:

- Clear – not subject to multiple interpretations, not ambiguous
- Relative – all key elements of the project requirements must relate to the requirement definition and be covered by evaluation criteria.
- Discriminating – separate best, average and weaker proposals
- Non-discriminatory – fair and reasonable
- Realistic – given the nature or value of the contract
- Measurable – capable of being quantified, calculable
- Economical – use of the criteria should not take an unreasonable amount of time or resources.
- Justifiable – make sense and can be justified on common sense, technical and legal basis; mandatory and heavily weighted criteria must be justified.

It is also critical that Selection Committee members have a working definition for each range of scores and that there is consistency in the members understanding of the purpose and meaning of the specific evaluation criteria.

When Selection Committee members have significantly different scores for the same evaluation criteria, doubt can be raised that all members have the same understanding of the criteria.

It is important that all evaluation criteria are specific, measurable and objective and directly tie back to the goods or services being procured. It is also suggested that a best practice is for Selection Committee members to have time during an open meeting in which they can discuss what they each found to be of importance in each proposal before completing their final score sheets. This allows all members to share their understanding of the proposal received and encourages a uniform understanding of proposals submitted.