

SOURCE SELECTION STATEMENT

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center Information Sciences and Library Services Contract Request for Proposal (RFP): NNG12381152R

On May 9, 2013, I, as the designated Source Selection Authority (SSA) for the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) Information Sciences and Library Services (ISLS) acquisition, met with the Integrated Evaluation Team (IET) appointed to evaluate proposals for the GSFC ISLS contract. A full briefing of the results of the evaluation conducted by the IET was presented to me, resulting in my source selection decision. Prior to the briefing, I familiarized myself with the presentation materials.

Procurement Description

The purpose of this procurement is to acquire information sciences and library services for the Homer E. Newell Library at the Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland. The services will include information sciences services and traditional library services in six technical areas via issued task orders. The areas are: (1) Research Support; (2) Procurement of Electronic Resources; (3) Data Transfer; (4) Information Dissemination; (5) Day-to-day Library Management; and (6) Education and Public Outreach.

This contract is for non-commercial services. A single Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ), Cost Plus Fixed Fee (CPFF) contract will be awarded. Task orders will be awarded for all work to be performed under the contract. The ordering period will be five years from the effective start date of the contract which will commence after a 30 day phase-in period.

Background

This procurement was conducted as a total small business set-aside based upon responses received from a sources sought notice synopsis in FedBizOpps and the NASA Acquisition Information System (NAIS).

I appointed the IET on May 9, 2012.

A Draft Request for Proposal (DRFP), was issued on July 30, 2012, requesting comments from industry. One-on-one meetings were held with ten interested firms in August, 2012. The final RFP was issued on September 29, 2012. Three amendments to the RFP were issued to address questions received and to extend the closing date to November 5, 2012.

Timely proposals were received by the due date from the following four offerors (listed in alphabetical order):

- Cadence Group Associates, with Zimmerman Associates, Inc., as a significant subcontractor;
- International Computer Systems, Inc. (ICS)
- SaiTech, Inc., with BAE Systems Information Solutions, Inc. as a significant subcontractor; and
- SM Resources Corporation (SMRC), with Library Associates of Maryland, LLC as a significant subcontractor.

Upon receipt of proposals, the Contract Specialist conducted an initial review to determine if all information had been provided, whether each offeror made a reasonable attempt to present an acceptable proposal, and whether offerors were eligible to perform the work. ICS's proposal was determined to be unacceptable and was not evaluated further.

Evaluation Procedures

The IET conducted its evaluation using a streamlined evaluation process and the principles for source selection identified in FAR Part 15.3 and NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) 1815.3, and the RFP evaluation criteria. The IET evaluated proposals in accordance with the criteria established in the RFP FAR provision 52.215-1, "Instructions to Offerors – Competitive Acquisitions." The following factors were used to evaluate proposals: Mission Suitability, Past Performance, and Cost. Under Mission Suitability two subfactors were considered: Subfactor A- Technical Approach to Representative Task Orders (RTOs) and Subfactor B – Management Approach. Cost was significantly less important than the combination of Mission Suitability and Past Performance. As individual factors Cost was less important than Mission Suitability but was more important than Past Performance.

Mission Suitability: The mission suitability proposals were evaluated by classifying findings as strengths, weaknesses, significant strengths, significant weaknesses, or deficiencies. The overall Mission Suitability proposal was evaluated to determine how well the offeror understood the technical requirements as expressed in the offeror's approach to performing the RTOs. One of the following adjectival ratings was then assigned to each mission suitability subfactor: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor.

Past Performance: Under the past performance factor, the IET evaluated each offeror's recent and relevant performance of work similar in size, content, and complexity to the requirements of this effort.

The IET first determined if the contract was recent (ongoing or completed less than three years prior to the issuance of the RFP). Contracts completed more than three years prior to issuance of this RFP were not considered recent and were not evaluated.

The Government considered the relevance in terms of size (must meet/exceed an average annual contract value of at least \$300K) and content (type and complexity of services or work, in comparison to the requirements of this solicitation). The IET reviewed the scope of work for each referenced contract as written in both the past performance volume and as described in the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) reports. Telephone interviews were also

conducted for each referenced contract as well as those found in PPIRS for work that appeared to be similar to the ISLS requirements.

The IET also considered information that was an indication of how well the contractor performed. This performance information came from both PPIRS reports and from telephone interviews. Telephone interviews followed the same general format as PPIRS reports. PPIRS allows ratings in six areas: Quality of Product/Service; Schedule; Cost Control; Business Relations; Management of Key Personnel; and Utilization of Small Business. The IET did not consider Utilization of Small Business since this procurement was conducted as a 100% small business set-aside and, therefore, not relevant.

The past performance of significant subcontractors was also evaluated and considered in the overall confidence level for each offeror.

The Level of Confidence ratings were specified as defined in the RFP. The adjectival ratings were: Very High Level of Confidence, High Level of Confidence, Moderate Level of Confidence, Low Level of Confidence, Very Low Level of Confidence, and Neutral.

Cost: The evaluation of cost was conducted in accordance with the RFP and FAR Part 15.305(a) (1) and NFS Part 1815.305 (a)(1)(b). The Government performed a cost analysis that included a cost realism analysis based on mission suitability findings and a comparison of proposed direct costs and the In-House Government cost estimate. The Government evaluated the offeror's proposed approach and cost estimate for each RTO and assessed the offeror's approach based on experience and technical knowledge of source evaluation members along with consulting subject matter experts, to determine the reasonableness of the number of hours and labor categories for each offeror's approach. The Government evaluated the proposed labor rates and considered the proposed fee for reasonableness based on historical contract data and salary surveys for the local area. Information was also obtained from the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA). In instances where DCMA information was not available, the Government evaluated the proposed labor rate and indirect rate structures for realism and made adjustments where necessary.

Evaluation Findings

The IET's mission suitability findings and evaluations of past performance and cost were presented to me on May 9, 2013. Those findings and evaluations are summarized as follows:

Cadence

Mission Suitability: Cadence's proposal received an "Excellent" adjectival rating for the technical approach to the RTOs (Subfactor A) and a rating of "Very Good" for management approach (Subfactor B). There were no significant weaknesses or deficiencies.

Subfactor-A

Cadence's approach to RTO 1 was considered a significant strength. The proposal demonstrated a thorough understanding of the technical requirements and the objectives of the digital library. This was evident by virtue of the block diagram, generational considerations, 24/7 accessibility, schedule

for software back-up and upgrades, and configuration management of system documentation. Cadence received a second significant strength for its strategic planning for the digital library. The discussion of its five year vision and strategic plan addressed not only budget concerns but also provided a level of detail and recommendations for improving content delivery through the use of the latest technological means. Cadence received a third significant strength for its proposed risk management processes and techniques that included identifying risks associated with each of the RTOs, as well as contract-level risks, and corresponding mitigation strategies for each risk.

Cadence received a strength for its approach to RTO 2. The approach is based on an established, nine step methodology designed to locate and provide comprehensive, quality reference information on topics in science and engineering ranging from the relatively simple to the complex and obscure.

Cadence received a weakness for underestimating the projected labor hours for the RTOs. The bases of estimates (BOEs) did not explain how it could satisfy the requirements of the RTOs within the number of labor hours proposed.

Subfactor-B

Cadence received a significant strength for its subcontractor management plan. It proposed a clear process for escalating problems to the corporate level, for the Prime and Subcontractor. The corrective action process explicitly recognizes that the interests of both companies are secondary to contract performance.

Cadence received a strength for its detailed and well formulated discussion of communication, roles, and responsibilities, including the interfaces within and among the Prime and Subcontractor, communications with the Library customer, and interfaces with the Government. Cadence received a second strength for its sound approach to securing a \$1M line of credit and a plan to purchase up to \$1M of technical subscriptions. The plan includes collaborations with other libraries to minimize costs and leverage content accessibility. Cadence received a third strength for its staffing plan. The proposed Program Manager (PM) has extensive experience with virtual libraries and leading content distribution technologies. It is anticipated that all the other vacant positions are expected to be filled in house or by incumbent staff.

Cadence received a weakness for its Safety and Health Plan. The Safety and Health Plan did not fully address all of the requisite requirements. For example, key elements of emergency preparedness were missing. Cadence received a second weakness for its phase-in plan. The phase-in plan contains no schedule, little discussion of specific phase-in risks, and little discussion of how phase-in activities would be accomplished.

Past Performance: The IET determined that there is a “High Level of Confidence” that Cadence would be able to successfully perform the requirements of the GSFC effort based on its past performance and that of the proposed subcontractor. Performance ratings for both ranged from High to Very High on the various contracts that were evaluated. The IET determined that Cadence had demonstrated very effective past performance of work comparable to the GSFC effort in size and content (complexity and type).

Cost: Cadence had a total probable cost that was approximately 4% higher than SMRC's total probable cost and approximately 6% lower than SaiTech's total probable cost.

SaiTech

Mission Suitability: SaiTech's proposal received a "Poor" adjectival rating for the technical approach to the RTOs (Subfactor A) and a rating of "Fair" for management approach (Subfactor B). There were no significant strengths or deficiencies.

Subfactor-A

SaiTech received a strength for its strategic planning for the digital library. The offeror provided an impressive list of key challenges for the ISLS as well as a four-pronged technical plan that is responsive to the ISLS relevant future objectives to utilize technology to manage costs, improve services, and enhance the customer online experience for an increasingly digital library.

SaiTech received a weakness for an inadequate discussion of risk associated with the RTOs as it did not adequately identify and address technical risks for RTO 1. Risk management addressed at the contract-level and in the context of its management plan did not sufficiently speak to risks specific to the RTOs.

SaiTech received a significant weakness for an inadequate approach to RTO 1. The task plan was not detailed, nor complete enough to demonstrate reasonableness and effectiveness. The offeror did not address a number of significant requirements, e.g. the 24/7 accessibility requirement. SaiTech received a second significant weakness for an inadequate approach to RTO2. The offeror did not convey an appreciation for the fact that RTO 2 may require access to physical resources, either at the GSFC library or elsewhere. Database subscriptions and e-journal subscriptions were put on the same footing.

Subfactor-B

SaiTech received a weakness for an inadequate plan to obtain the \$1M line of credit and purchase the subscriptions. The plan lacked specific detail concerning the acquisition of the required resources. SaiTech received a second weakness for its Safety and Health Plan. The Safety and Health Plan did not fully address all of the requisite requirements. For example, the process for reporting mishaps and close calls to GSFC is missing key elements. And it did not include information for reporting to the CO or inclusion into the Incident Reporting Information System (IRIS). SaiTech received a third weakness for its inadequate phase-in plan. The phase-in plan relies unreasonably on input from the incumbent contractor and from the Government. Recruitment of non-incumbent/non-SaiTech employees would begin only after other options have failed. SaiTech received a fourth weakness for not providing an adequate organizational chart showing where the ISLS contract fits within its organization. This does not allow for the complete evaluation of program management by the prime contractor.

Past Performance: The IET determined that there is a “High Level” of Confidence that SaiTech would be able to successfully perform the requirements of the ISLS effort based on their past performance as well as that of the proposed subcontractor. Performance ratings were very high. The IET determined that SaiTech along with its significant subcontractor had demonstrated very effective past performance of work comparable to the GSFC effort in size and content (complexity and type).

Cost: The IET did not adjust SaiTech’s cost. Its probable cost was approximately 11% higher than SMRC’s probable cost and approximately 6% higher than Cadence’s probable cost.

SMRC

Mission Suitability: SMRC’s proposal received a “Good” adjectival rating for the technical approach to the RTOs (Subfactor A) and a rating of “Good” for management approach (Subfactor B). There were no significant strengths, significant weaknesses, or deficiencies.

Subfactor-A

SMRC received a strength for its approach to RTO 1. The proposal demonstrated an understanding of the technical requirements and the objectives of the digital library. It recognized the role the Center Network Environment (CNE) plays in the accessibility of the digital library. SMRC received a second strength for its approach to RTO 2. The approach is based on a well-established, seven step methodology including the “the reference interview”. The offeror recognized the occasional need to contact experts who wrote or participated in a conference or program, or who contributed an unpublished paper. SMRC received a third strength for its proposed risk management plan. Although the discussion addresses primarily contract-level risk, it is evident that digital library risk is considered, which relates to RTO 1.

SMRC received a weakness for underestimating the projected labor hours for RTO 2. The bases of estimate (BOE) did not explain how it can satisfy the requirements of the RTO within the number of labor hours proposed.

Subfactor-B

SMRC received a strength for its staffing plan. The proposed Program Manager (PM) has extensive scientific as well as library credentials and over 35 years of experience. The plan stresses capturing and retaining experienced incumbent personnel. The offeror maintains a nationwide recruiting database of over 42,000 librarians and information professionals. SMRC received a second strength for its subcontractor management plan. The prime offeror centralizes subcontractor oversight responsibility under the Project Manager, and bolsters this with additional, clearly defined roles and responsibilities assigned to two corporate executives, namely the Corporate Manager and the Client Services Manager. SMRC received a weakness for its Safety and Health Plan. The Safety and Health Plan did not fully address all of the requisite requirements. For example, there was no mention of procedures for exercising jurisdiction of mishap investigations involving GSFC and other contract personnel. SMRC received a second weakness for its phase-in plan. The offeror fails

to explain just how or why it should attempt to schedule its phase-in over a period of just five days rather than the 30 days allotted in the RFP, SMRC failed to mention any risk associated with phase-in. SMRC received a third weakness for its task order management plan. SMRC stated “The Program Manager has experience working with the Task Order Management Plan system” but provides little detail on how task orders would actually be managed.

Past Performance: The IET determined that there is a “High Level of Confidence” that SMRC would be able to successfully perform the requirements of the ISLS effort based on its past performance and that of the proposed subcontractor. Performance ratings ranged from Moderate to Very High. The IET determined that SMRC had demonstrated very effective past performance of work comparable to the GSFC effort in size and content (complexity and type).

Cost: SMRC had a total evaluated probable cost that was approximately 4% lower than the total probable cost of Cadence, and 11% lower than SaiTech’s probable cost.

Selection Decision

I have carefully reviewed the IET’s presentation materials and accompanying ISLS Cost Evaluation Report detailing the various aspects of cost for the three offerors. I determined that the findings presented by the IET, as documented in its presentation and supported by the accompanying Cost Evaluation Report were detailed, consistent with the evaluation criteria in the ISLS RFP, and provided a clear description of the merits of each proposal. I determined that the findings were reasonable and valid for the purpose of making a selection decision. In determining which proposal offered the best value to NASA, I referred to the relative order of importance of the three evaluation factors as specified in the RFP.

“The Cost Factor is significantly less important than the combined importance of the Mission Suitability Factor and the Past Performance Factor but more important than the Past Performance Factor.”

Regarding the Mission Suitability Factor, the most important factor, I noted that the proposal submitted by Cadence was technically superior to the proposal submitted by SMRC based on the content of the findings. I noted that Cadence’s proposal received the highest individual subfactor adjectival ratings in both Subfactors A and B. I also noted that Cadence’s proposal received the highest overall total point score, and the highest point score amongst all offerors in Subfactors A and B. Finally, I also noted that SaiTech’s proposal received the lowest adjectival ratings and point scores for both subfactors.

Regarding Subfactor A, the most heavily weighted subfactor, I noted Cadence’s Excellent rating was higher than SMRC (Good) and SaiTech (Poor). I was particularly impressed with Cadence’s response to Subfactor A, which resulted in three significant strengths. The three significant strengths assigned to Cadence’s proposal reflect Cadence’s ability to design technical solutions that will maintain and advance the Goddard Library, and that reflect a proactive approach that embraces technology. These features demonstrate forward-looking solutions that reflect a strong capacity for innovation while maintaining a deep understanding of the research role the library plays in

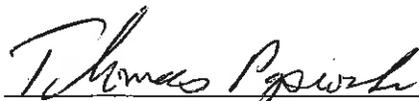
advancing Goddard's mission. I also noted that Cadence did receive a weakness finding in Subfactor A, but I find it did not significantly detract from its proposal. SMRC received three strengths and one weakness for this subfactor. I did not consider it on par with Cadence's Subfactor A proposal. SaiTech received a strength but received two significant weaknesses. In summary, Cadence's proposal offers a significant technical advantage in subfactor A over the SMRC and SaiTech proposals.

With respect to Subfactor B (Management Approach), I noted that Cadence offered a strong proposal and was the only offeror that received a significant strength and was assigned a Very Good adjectival rating. The significant strength was for its plan to deal with challenges that might arise associated with its subcontractor. While SMRC received a Good adjectival rating in this subfactor, it did not receive a significant strength in this area and therefore I did not find its proposal to be as competitive as that submitted by Cadence. SaiTech received a Fair adjectival rating as it had four weaknesses identified under this subfactor.

Regarding the cost evaluation, SaiTech had a total evaluated probable cost that was higher than those offered by Cadence and SMRC. Though SMRC offered the lowest total evaluated probable cost, Cadence's total evaluated probable cost was within 4% of SMRC's total probable cost. Based on this relatively minimal cost differential, probable cost is not a discriminator, and the technical and management advantages offered by Cadence in its proposal more than offset the minimal cost premium associated with Cadence's total evaluated probable cost.

Regarding the past performance evaluation, I noted that that the IET's evaluation resulted in an assessment of a "High" level of confidence for each of the three offerors (Cadence, SaiTech and SMRC). I reviewed the details and basis for those ratings and determined the Past Performance Factor was not a discriminator in the selection decision.

In view of the proceeding discussion and of the relative importance of the three evaluation factors identified in the RFP, I found that Cadence's Mission Suitability proposal offered significant technical advantages over the other two offerors, particularly within Subfactor A and Subfactor B. Given that the Cost Factor is less important than Mission Suitability factor, the technical and management advantages offered by Cadence's proposal more than offset the minimal cost premium associated with Cadence's proposal. Therefore, I select Cadence for the award of the ISLS contract.



Thomas A. Paprocki
Source Selection Authority

6/4/13
Date