



## **Guidelines for Evaluation Committee Members**

### **Procurement of Professional and General Services**

Unless the provisions of the Request for Proposal (RFP) or circumstances dictate otherwise, the City of Columbia Purchasing Division will follow and require the evaluation committee members to follow the guidelines set forth in this document. This procedure does not authorize the evaluation committee to award a contract or to negotiate an implied or actual contractual arrangement, in any type, form or manner, with any offer while performing the evaluation process described herein.

#### ***Evaluation Meetings***

Evaluation meetings will be held with all committee members to discuss, as a group, the facts and relative merits of each proposal. The Purchasing Agent or appropriate Buyer will serve as chairperson of the committee. During the first committee meeting, decisions related to telephone reference calls, question/answer sessions, oral presentations and/or on-site inspections will be made.

### **The Responsibility of the Evaluation Committee**

1. The evaluation committee has the responsibility to ensure that an impartial, objective, and professional evaluation is successfully and properly accomplished for those proposals received in response to the RFP officially issued by the City Purchasing Division in accordance with this procedure.
2. After completion of the evaluation process, each member of the evaluation committee is responsible for the submission and delivery of an evaluation report and recommendation for contract award in accordance with the instructions contained elsewhere in this procedure to the Purchasing Division. The committee may decide to submit one combined report, signed by all evaluation committee members.
3. The evaluation committee is responsible for ensuring that no public or private announcement is made related to the evaluation process and recommendation for contract award until the Department for whom the RFP was issued has reviewed and accepted the evaluation committee's evaluation report and recommendation, and recommendation for award of the contract has been presented to the Purchasing Division.
4. The evaluation committee is responsible to ensure that no contractual commitment or special negotiated arrangements are entered into, implied and/or implemented during the evaluation process until such time as the City officially awards a contract.
5. Each member of the evaluation committee has the responsibility to read, understand, and comply with the provisions of this document.
6. Each member of the evaluation committee must understand that: (a) evaluators may be required to defend their actions, conduct, and conclusions in a court of law or court of inquiry, if deemed necessary, and (b) the evaluator's documentation shall be made available to the general public after approval and the award of a contract by the City.



## **A Three Step Evaluation Process Required**

The evaluation committee must use a three (3) step evaluation process when evaluating proposal responses. The following narrative describes the three (3) sequential steps involved.

### ***Step One: Determination of Responsiveness***

1. As the first step, the proposals must be thoroughly reviewed by the evaluation committee to determine if each proposal agrees or disagrees with the requirements set forth in the official RFP document and any RFP amendments.
2. This required review action by the evaluators is identified as a **Determination of Responsiveness**. The terminology and rules which apply to the act of determining responsiveness are described in the following paragraphs.
  - A. A **responsive bid/proposal** is one that agrees or complies with the mandatory requirements of the RFP documents. A responsive bid will be permitted to proceed to the next evaluation step.
  - B. A bid/proposal does not necessarily need to describe or acknowledge each and every individual requirement of an RFP. Generally speaking, a bid is considered responsive **if** the bidder manually signs the response page of the RFP and submits the required submittal information **unless** the bid: (a) expresses disagreement with a requirement, (b) takes exception to a requirement, (c) proposes an action contradictory to a requirement, (d) will otherwise prevent the enforcement and/or execution of a requirement, or (e) fails to include mandatory submittal information.
  - C. A **non-responsive bid/proposal** is one that disagrees or fails to comply with the mandatory requirements of the RFP. A non-responsive bid must be eliminated from further consideration and can not be recommended for an award of a contract.
  - D. The mandatory requirements of the RFP documents are generally identified by the words “**must**” or “**shall**.” However, other types of language structure may also describe a mandatory condition.
  - E. The word “**should**” means that a contractor is strongly encouraged to perform a specific act, but the word does not impose a mandatory requirement to do so. The word, “**will**” indicates future tense only and does not mean a mandatory condition. The word “**May**” means that an act is permitted, but not required.
3. The determination of responsiveness is a very serious matter. The courts have held that an award of a contract must be based upon a bid which conforms to the material specifications published to the public (i.e. a responsive bid). To do otherwise would misrepresent the procurement intent to the public and would therefore not constitute a proper and valid award. Likewise, to arbitrarily declare any unsuccessful bid non-responsive without reasonable and legitimate cause may also invalidate the award of a contract even though the selected bid was declared responsive and the lowest and best.



### *Step Two: Determination of Relevant Facts*

1. After completing Step One, the evaluators must determine the relevant facts associated with the responsive proposals only.
2. The **Determination of Relevant Facts** is the identification of the specific details, data, and information as presented in each responsive bid as may relate to the evaluation criteria published in the RFP. **A Relevant Fact** is tangible and objective information found in a responsive bid which has a definite logical relationship with, and importance to, the matter under consideration.
3. The following methods must be considered by the evaluation committee when determining relevant facts if such evaluation criteria is published in an RFP.
  - A. **Detailed Review of Written Bids:** Each bid must be carefully studied for information which addresses the provisions of the RFP in relation to the published evaluation criteria to ensure a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the actual relationship between relevant facts.
  - B. **Determination of Cost and Pricing Data:** The evaluators must review all elements of the cost and pricing data submitted in each bid in order to identify the potential cost to the City, as well as any discrepancies, omissions, mathematical errors, etc.
    1. The evaluators must ascertain that each bidder's price and costing data conform to the pricing requirements of the RFP.
    2. The evaluators must insure that all prices in the bids are based on identical units of measure for an "apple-to-apple" comparison and do not contain exceptions to the pricing structure in the narrative of the bid.
  - C. **Determination of Cost Points:** Cost points shall be computed by the Purchasing Division in accordance with the calculation stated in the RFP, if any, using the standard formula of the Purchasing Division.
  - D. **Experience and Reliability:** The determination of relevant facts should include, but certainly not be limited to, the examination of bids for identification of such items as:
    1. Length of time the bidder has been in operation and performing services for private industry and/or government customers.
    2. The type, number, and duration of current and previous contracts.
    3. The type and kind of environment in which the experience occurred including the complexity of the activities or services involved, etc.
    4. The outcomes of contractual activities previously performed.
    5. Information gained from the bidder's references.
    6. Other historical information related to past performance.
  - E. **Expertise:** The determination of relevant facts should include, but not be limited to, the examination of bids to identify such information as:
    1. Educational levels of proposed staff.
    2. Experience of proposed staff.
    3. Overall qualifications of the proposed staff.
    4. Job descriptions and qualifications which may be required for any proposed and unidentified staff.
    5. Evidence of individual staff members' technical expertise in relationship to proposed work assignment.



- F. **Performance Methodology:** The determination of relevant facts should include, but not be limited to, the examination of bids to ascertain such information as:
1. Evidence of a concrete plan of action presented in the bid which describes a logical, timely, and technically sound method for performing the work as specified in the RFP.
  2. Evidence that the proposed tasks and sub-tasks of the performance methodology are sound, feasible, and necessary.
  3. Determining that what the bidder says that he/she will do can actually be accomplished.
  4. Identification of how and by what method the bidder plans to coordinate the performance of similar and dis-similar tasks for a successful outcome.
  5. Evidence that ample and reasonable manpower and time is included for any and all required tasks.
  6. Ascertaining by whom, when, where, why, how, and to what extent the tasks will be performed.
  7. Identification of organizational charts, staffing patterns, lines of authority, etc., depicting managerial control, quality assurance, timely work completion, etc.
- G. **Reference Contact and Experience Verification:** The evaluation committee as a whole or a sub-committee should contact references to identify and verify relevant facts related to the experience and other data presented in the bids. The names of all references contacted as well as the questions and subjects discussed should be documented.
- H. **Question/Answer Conference or Personal Interview:** Again, the evaluation committee as a whole or an appointed sub-committee may participate in a technical question/answer conference or personal interview with the bidders in order to verify or clarify the facts presented in the bids.
1. Telephone interviews are permitted in lieu of personal interviews, if desired.
  2. However, the evaluation committee members can not discuss the cost and pricing information with the bidders during any such conversations.
  3. Again, documentation concerning the question/answer conference or interview must be provided.
- I. **On-Site Inspection:** At times it may be necessary to tour and inspect facilities where the bidder provides services to inspect the bidder's current operations. Such inspections must be conducted by the evaluation committee as a whole or as an appointed sub-committee. Documentation to verify the tour will be required.

### *Step Three: Subjective Evaluation of the Bids*

1. After completing the first two steps, a subjective evaluation of the responsive bids must be conducted by the evaluators. Each responsive bid must be evaluated on its relative merits in comparison to the other responsive bid and in accordance with the evaluation criteria published in the RFP. The following guidelines should be considered when performing a subjective evaluation of the bids:
  - A. **Experience and Reliability:** The evaluators must subjectively evaluate the qualitative and quantitative nature of the bidders' experience and reliability in terms of the type and complexity of service required by the RFP. The evaluators must decide whether the bidder's experience and reliability have characteristics that will be an advantage or a disadvantage when performing the required services. Answering the question "**Why**" a particular experience factor is considered good or bad is extremely important aspect of the evaluators' documentation.
  - B. **Expertise:** The evaluators must subjectively evaluate the expertise of the personnel proposed to furnish the service. Consideration must be given to the benefits and deficiencies of the education, experience, and overall qualifications of the professional personnel and the key staff who will perform the various tasks to determine the degree of expertise. Other considerations must include the appropriateness of the job descriptions and/or resumes for each staff member proposed, and their relevance to the assigned task described in the bids.



- C. **Performance Methodology:** The evaluators must subjectively evaluate every aspect of the bidder's proposed plan of action (i.e. technical approach) and determine if the plan will successfully accomplish the required service. Additionally, such items as managerial control, quality assurance mechanisms, the compatibility of organizational lines of authority, and adequate staffing must be considered. Just as important is the consideration of the logical progression of individual tasks or the lack thereof, in terms of the needs, complexity, and objectives of the required service. The evaluators must decide the relative benefits and deficiencies of each fact related to the bidder's approach and the specific reasons upon which his/her opinions rest. These considerations must be summarized in the evaluator's evaluation report.

### **Assignment of Evaluation Impact Points**

1. An Evaluation Report Form may be completed by each evaluator serving on the evaluation committee to reflect and document that evaluator's opinion and recommending vote. The Purchasing Division will provide the appropriate form(s) so that the evaluator may assign impact points for each bidder in accordance with the published evaluation criteria. The individual evaluator's score points on the form represent, in a symbolic manner, that evaluator's subjective judgment and recommendation.
2. When assigning impact points for subjective categories, the best bid for each category shall receive the greatest number of points for that subjective category with the other and less desirable bids receiving fewer points according to the evaluator's best judgment. Although the scoring of points is a matter of subjectivity, the evaluator's judgment must be based on relevant fact as evidenced in the bid. Question/Answer Session, reference contacts, site inspection tours, and/or the provisions of the RFP itself.

### **Unacceptable Considerations**

1. A recommendation shall be considered unacceptable if based upon a fear that changing to a new contractor might create problems, cause adjustments or otherwise be undesirable. The purpose of the evaluation process is to select the lowest and best bid in an equitable and impartial manner. Remedies are available to ensure a smooth transition in the event a new contractor is selected.
2. A bidder shall not be penalized due solely to a lack of experience with the City itself, but must be judged, among other considerations, on the relevancy of their experience and expertise whenever it occurred.
3. A bidder shall not be given an unfair advantage due solely to previous or current contractual relationship with the City, but must be judged, among other considerations, on the relevancy of such experience in relation to the terms and requirements of the RFP.
4. Points for criteria such as experience, expertise, performance methodology, etc., shall not be manipulated to overcome cost, but shall be assigned in an impartial and objective manner consistent with the relevant facts and the evaluator's subjective judgment thereof.

### **Written Evaluation Report Required**

1. Upon the completion of the evaluator's subjective evaluation of "best", each evaluator must furnish an **Evaluation Report** to the Buyer of Record in the Purchasing Division for his/her review and completion of cost points. The evaluation committee may decide to submit one combined report signed by all reviewers. The **Evaluation Report** must consist of the following information:



A. The **Evaluation Report** by each evaluator completed with the “best” portion of the evaluation.

1. A Narrative Evaluation Report covering the “best” portion of the evaluation for *each bidder* by *each evaluator*. The Narrative Evaluation Report should be a summary explanation for the evaluator’s judgments and conclusions. The relationship between conclusions and impact points should be explained in the report. A sample format for the narrative will be found on the last page of this procedure.
2. A Determination of Responsiveness Summary Analysis which is a narrative summarizing the Determination of Responsiveness for each bidder. The narrative must document the reasons why a bid, if any, was declared non-responsive. The report must identify the specific part and paragraph number of the RFP containing the mandatory requirements with which the bidder’s bid fails to comply or agree. In addition, this report must identify the specific paragraph and page numbers of the bidder’s bid where the disagreement was found.
3. Supporting Documentation, if any. This shall include any supporting documentation related to verification calls to bidders’ references, Q/A sessions (interviews), and/or site inspections.

B. In addition to the written evaluation narrative, the evaluation committee as a group must submit documentation related to all telephone calls to bidders references, Q/A sessions (interviews), and/or site inspections.

2. The evaluation committee may be requested to provide assistance to the Purchasing Division representative in preparing any special reports such as a Determination of Responsiveness Report which documents the reasons why a bid, if any, was declared non-responsive. The report must reference that Part and paragraph number in the RFP which contains the mandatory conditions with which the bid failed to comply or agree. In addition, this report must indicate where the disagreement was found in the bid.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Buyer of Record will assign and insert cost points on the evaluation forms and return the evaluation recommendation to the User Department for a final award recommendation. The committee member’s opinions will be considered as recommendations only, and will be subject to review and acceptance by the Department.
2. The User Department must review the pricing information and the final recommendations of the evaluators, as determined by the Buyer of Record after insertion of cost points, and shall submit a written disposition to the Buyer of Record.
3. The Buyer of Record will not proceed with an award of contract until the written disposition, expressing acceptance or rejection of the evaluation recommendation is physically received, reviewed, and approved.

### **Public Record**

1. Evaluators are advised that all evaluation reports and documentation related to the award of a contract become a matter of public record and immediately subject to inspection by the general public and the bidders upon contract execution.



## Sample Format for Evaluator’s Narrative

Name of Bidder A: \_\_\_\_\_

**Experience and Reliability:**

**Strengths:**

- state an example
- state an example
- state an example

**Concerns:**

- state an example
- state an example
- state an example

(This section should present relevant facts related to previous contracts or projects that Bidder A has had as an organization. The conclusions reached by the evaluator and the benefits and deficiencies of such experiences should be discussed and evaluated. The basic reasons for the evaluator’s opinion and score points should be presented).

**Expertise of Personnel:**

**Strengths:**

- state an example
- state an example
- state an example

**Concerns:**

- state an example
- state an example
- state an example

(This section should present relevant facts related to the specific qualifications (or lack of them) of the staff proposed for the project. The specific benefits and deficiencies of the staffs’ qualifications should be described as well as the basic reasons for the evaluator’s opinions and score points).

**Proposed Method of Performance:**

**Strengths:**

- state an example
- state an example
- state an example

**Concerns:**

- state an example
- state an example
- state an example

(This section should describe the relevant facts related to the bidder’s proposed method of performing the Scope of Work. The specific benefits and deficiencies should be discussed in detail as well as reasons for the subjective judgment and conclusions reached by the evaluator).

Name of Bidder B: \_\_\_\_\_

**Experience and Reliability**

**Strengths:**

**Concerns:**

**Expertise of Personnel:**

**Strengths:**

**Concerns:**

**Proposed Method of Performance:**

**Strengths:**

**Concerns:**