



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
DIVISION OF PURCHASE AND PROPERTY
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April 15, 2014

Via Electronic Mail [ward@parisfoods.com] and USPS Regular Mail

Edward Cain
Sales Manager
Paris Foods Corp.
P.O. Box 121
Trappe, MD 21673

RE: Protest of Notice of Proposal Rejection
RFP #14-X-23427 Foods: Vegetables, Frozen — DSS

Dear Mr. Cain:

This letter is in response to your email¹ received April 11, 2014, referencing the subject Request for Proposal (“RFP”) and regarding the proposal submitted by Paris Foods Corporation (“Paris Foods”) to the Division of Purchase and Property (“the Division”). The record of this procurement notes that Paris Foods’ proposal was rejected for absence of a completed *Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran* form. In your letter, you acknowledge the omission of an appropriately checked box on the form. However, you request that I reconsider the Division’s rejection of Paris Foods’ proposal and permit Paris Foods to complement its proposal by acceptance of the fully completed *Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran* form included as an attachment to your letter of protest.

I have reviewed the record of this procurement, including the RFP, Paris Foods’ proposal, and relevant statutes, regulations, and case law. This review has provided me with the information necessary to determine the facts of this matter and to render an informed determination on the merits of Paris Foods’ protest.

The above-referenced solicitation was comprised of the RFP and other documents, one of which was the three-part document titled *NJ Standard RFP Forms*. This document is comprised of three expandable forms, namely an *Ownership Disclosure Form*, a *Disclosure of Investigations and Other Actions Involving Bidder Form*, and a *Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran* form.

¹ Your email correspondence is accepted as a timely letter of protest.

These forms are addressed in RFP Section 4.0, *Proposal Preparation and Submission*. The relevant text reads as follows:

4.4.1.2 NJ Standard RFP Forms

One of the downloadable RFP documents is titled NJ STANDARD RFP FORMS. It is comprised of three separate forms, two of which (Ownership Disclosure and Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran) discussed below, must be completed, signed and submitted with the bidder's proposal. **The bidder is cautioned that failure to complete, sign and submit either of these two forms will be cause to reject its proposal as non-responsive as noted below.** If the bidder submits a hard copy proposal, each of the two forms must be physically signed.

If the bidder is submitting an electronic proposal through the Division's eBid system, there are only two acceptable forms of signature for the two forms:

1. The bidder may download the document, physically complete and sign each form, scan the completed document and then upload it, or
2. The bidder may download the document, type the name of the signatory in the space designated for certification signature in each of the forms and then upload the document.

Note: A bidder's entry of a Personal Identification Number (PIN) will not suffice as a signature on these two forms. A signed RFP Signatory Page is also not an acceptable substitute for signature on these two forms.

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4.4.1.2.2 Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran Form

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:32-58, the bidder must utilize this Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran form to certify that neither the bidder, nor one of its parents, subsidiaries, and/or affiliates (as defined in N.J.S.A. 52:32-56(e)(3)), is listed on the Department of the Treasury's List of Persons or Entities Engaging in Prohibited Investment Activities in Iran and that neither the bidder, nor one of its parents, subsidiaries, and/or affiliates, is involved in any of the investment activities set forth in N.J.S.A. 52:32-56(f). If the bidder is unable to so certify, the bidder shall provide a detailed and precise description of such activities as directed on the form. A bidder's failure to submit the completed and signed form with its proposal will result in the rejection of the proposal as nonresponsive and preclude the award of a contract to said bidder.

[(Emphasis in original.)]

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 17:12-2.2,² a bidder's proposal must "[c]ontain all RFP-required certifications, forms, and attachments, completed and signed as required" or "be subject to automatic rejection." As set forth in RFP 4.4.1.2 and 4.4.1.2.2 listed above, the submission of a completed and signed *Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran* form as part of a bidder's proposal was required.

In this case, the record indicates that Paris Foods' proposal submission did not include a completed *Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran* form. Under Part 1: Certification, the form

² The Division's administrative rules governing its procurement programs are set forth in N.J.A.C. 17:12. These rules can be accessed at <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/purchase/AdminCode.shtml>.

clearly states: “Bidders must complete Part 1 by checking either box. Failure to check one of the boxes will render the proposal non-responsive.” Despite these instructions, neither box was checked.

Notwithstanding Paris Foods’ interest in competing for this procurement, it would not be in the State’s best interests to allow a bidder who did not provide the required certifications to be eligible to participate in the procurement process. Such acceptance would unlevel the bidders’ playing field, as the State received responsive proposals in which certifications were provided as required. The deficiency at issue cannot be remedied after the proposal submission deadline, as acceptance of Paris Foods’ proposal under these circumstances would be contrary to the provisions of the governing statute and would provide Paris Foods with disclamation options not available to those bidders whose proposals were fully responsive. In light of the findings set forth above, I must deny your request for eligibility to participate in the competition for the subject contract. This is my final agency decision on this matter.

This is an unfortunate situation for the State, as we encourage competition. Thank you for your interest in this procurement and I look forward to your company’s continuing interest in doing business with the State of New Jersey.

Sincerely,



Ronald G. Wengerd
Chief Hearing Officer

RGW:DF

c: L. DuBois
R. Sharbaugh
J. Signoretta
G. Gerstenacker
D. Rodriguez
