



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
DIVISION OF PURCHASE AND PROPERTY
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August 7, 2014

Via Electronic Mail [brucedpm@aol.com] and USPS Regular Mail

Bruce D. Bitcover, DPM
2030 Lawrenceville Rd.
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

RE: Protest of Notice of Proposal Rejection
RFP #15-X-23096 Temporary Staffing for Health and Medical Services

Dear Dr. Bitcover:

This letter is in response to your email and fax¹ both dated July 31, 2014, and received August 1, 2014, referencing the subject Request for Proposal (“RFP”) and regarding the proposal submitted by Bruce D. Bitcover, DPM (“Bitcover”) to the Division of Purchase and Property (“the Division”). The record of this procurement notes that Bitcover’s proposal was rejected for absence of a signed *Ownership Disclosure Form*. In your correspondence, you request the opportunity to access your proposal and sign the original form submitted to the Division.

I have reviewed the record of this procurement, including the RFP, Bitcover’s 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 Bitcover’s 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, including an *Ownership Disclosure Form*, a *Disclosure of Investigations and Other Actions Involving Bidder Form*, and a *Disclosure of Investment Activities in Iran* form.

The text of the RFP addresses these forms in 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

¹ These correspondences are accepted as a timely letter of protest.

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.

4.4.1.2.1 Ownership Disclosure Form

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:25-24.2, in the event the bidder is a corporation, partnership or sole proprietorship, the bidder must complete and sign the attached Ownership Disclosure Form. A current completed Ownership Disclosure Form must be received prior to or accompany the submitted proposal. A bidder's failure to submit the completed and signed form with its proposal will result in the rejection of the proposal as non-responsive and preclude the award of a contract to said bidder unless the Division has on file a signed and accurate Ownership Disclosure Form dated and received no more than six months prior to the proposal submission deadline for this procurement. If any ownership change has occurred within the last six months, a new Ownership Disclosure Form must be completed, signed and submitted with the proposal.

[(Emphasis in original.)]

Furthermore, as a courtesy to all bidders, the Division provided a Proposal Checklist as an accompaniment to the RFP. The Checklist included the following:

FORMS THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH YOUR PROPOSAL:

- RFP Signatory Page with physical signature or PIN (PIN is for eBid submission ONLY)
- Completed Price Sheets as instructed in Section 4.4.5 of the RFP
- Completed and signed Ownership Disclosure Form*
- Completed and signed Disclosure of Investments in Iran Form*

....

** The Ownership Disclosure, Disclosure of Investigations and Other Actions Involving Bidder, and the Disclosure of Investments in Iran forms MUST each contain either a physical or typed signature (typed signatures are only acceptable for eBid submissions). . . .*

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 Sections 4.4.1.2 and 4.4.1.2.1 listed above, the submission of a completed and signed *Ownership Disclosure Form* prior to or as part of the proposal was required for the subject RFP.

In this case, the record indicates that Bitcover's proposal submission did not include a properly signed *Ownership Disclosure Form*. Rather, accompanying certification was left blank. As noted above, the two permissible ways to sign this forms was either: 1) downloading the document, physically signing it form, scanning the completed document, and then uploading it; or 2) typing the name of the signatory in the space designated for certification signature and uploading the document. Notwithstanding Bitcover's 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 signed certification at the time of proposal submission 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 require in a timely fashion. 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 and appreciate the time and effort put forth in Bitcover's proposal. Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of New Jersey and for registering your business with **NJ START** at www.njstart.gov, the State of New Jersey's new eProcurement system.

Sincerely,



Ronald G. Wengerd
Chief Hearing Officer

RGW:DF

c: L. DuBois
E. Mackay
J. Kemery
D. Rodriguez

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>.