

will not be changed after the date set for receipt of proposals.

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1872.403 Methods of evaluation.

Alternative methods are available to initiate the evaluation of proposals received in response to an AO. These are referred to as the Advisory Subcommittee Evaluation Process, the Contractor Evaluation Process, and the Government Evaluation Process. In all processes, a subcommittee of the appropriate Program Office Steering Committee will be formed to categorize the proposals. Following categorization, those proposals still in consideration will be processed to the selection official.

1872.403-1 Advisory subcommittee evaluation process.

(a) Evaluation of scientific and/or technological merit of proposed investigations is the responsibility of an advisory subcommittee of the Steering Committee. The subcommittee constitutes a peer group qualified to judge the scientific and technological aspects of all investigation proposals. One or more subcommittees may be established depending on the breadth of the technical or scientific disciplines inherent in the AO's objectives. Each subcommittee represents a discipline or grouping of closely related disciplines. To maximize the quality of the subcommittee evaluation and categorization, the following conditions of selection and appointment should be considered.

(1) The subcommittee normally should be established on an ad hoc basis.

(2) Qualifications and acknowledgment of the professional abilities of the subcommittee members are of primary importance. Institutional affiliations are not sufficient qualifications.

(3) The executive secretary of the subcommittee must be a full-time NASA employee.

(4) Subcommittee members should normally be appointed as early as possible and prior to receipt of proposals.

(5) Care must be taken to avoid conflicts of interest. These include financial interests, institutional affili-

ations, professional biases and associations, as well as familiar relationships. Conflicts could further occur as a result of imbalance between Government and non-Government appointees or membership from institutions representing a singular school of thought in discipline areas involving competitive theories in approach to an investigation.

(6) The subcommittee should convene as a group in closed sessions for proposal evaluation to protect the proposer's proprietary ideas and to allow frank discussion of the proposer's qualifications and the merit of the proposer's ideas. Lead review responsibility for each proposal may be assigned to members most qualified in the involved discipline. It is important that each proposal be considered by the entire subcommittee.

(b) It may not be possible to select a subcommittee fully satisfying all of the conditions described in paragraph (a) of this section. It is the responsibility of the nominating and appointing officials to make trade-offs, where necessary, among the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section. This latitude permits flexibility in making decisions in accord with circumstances of each application. In so doing, however, it is emphasized that recognized expertise in evaluating dissimilar proposals is essential to the continued workability of the investigation acquisition process.

(c) Candidate subcommittee members should be nominated by the office having responsibility for the evaluation. Nominations should be approved in accordance with NMI 1150.2, "Establishment, Operation, and Duration of NASA Advisory Committees." The notification of appointment should specify the duration of assignment on the subcommittee, provisions concerning conflicts of interest, and arrangements regarding honoraria, per diem, and travel when actually employed.

(d) It is important that members of the subcommittee be formally instructed as to their responsibilities with respect to the investigation acquisition process, even where several or all of the members have served previously. This briefing of subcommittee members should include:

(1) Instruction of subcommittee members on agency policies and procedures pertinent to acquisition of investigations.

(2) Review of the program goals, AO objectives, and evaluation criteria, including relative importance, which provide the basis for evaluation.

(3) Instruction on the use of preliminary proposal evaluation data furnished by the Installation Project Office. The subcommittee should examine these data to gain a better understanding of the proposed investigations, any associated problems, and to consider cost in relation to the value of the investigations' objectives.

(4) Definition of responsibility of the subcommittee for evaluation and categorization with respect to scientific and/or technical merit in accordance with the evaluation criteria.

(5) Instruction for documentation of deliberations and categorizations of the subcommittee.

(6) Inform the chairperson of the subcommittee and all members that they should familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 CFR part 2635, and the Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct for employees of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 5 CFR part 6901, regarding conflicts of interest. Members should inform the appointing authority if their participation presents a real or apparent conflict of interest situation. In addition, all participants should inform the selection official in the event they are subjected to pressure or improper contacts.

(7) Inform members that prior to the selection and announcement of the successful investigators and investigations, subcommittee members and NASA personnel shall not reveal any information concerning the evaluation to anyone who is not also participating in the same evaluation proceedings, and then only to the extent that such information is required in connection with such proceedings. Also, inform members that subsequent to selection of an investigation and announcement of negotiations with the investigator's institution, information concerning the proceedings of the subcommittee

and data developed by the subcommittee will be made available to others within NASA only when the requestor demonstrates a need to know for a NASA purpose. Such information will be made available to persons outside NASA including other Government agencies, only when such disclosure is concurred in by the Office of General Counsel. In this connection, reference is made to 18 U.S.C. 1905 which provides criminal sanctions if any officer or employee (including special employees) of the United States discloses or divulges certain kinds of business confidential and trade secret information unless authorized by law.

(e) The product of an advisory subcommittee is the classification of proposals into four categories. The categories are:

(1) Category I—Well conceived and scientifically and technically sound investigations pertinent to the goals of the program and the AO's objectives and offered by a competent investigator from an institution capable of supplying the necessary support to ensure that any essential flight hardware or other support can be delivered on time and that data can be properly reduced, analyzed, interpreted, and published in a reasonable time. Investigations in Category I are recommended for acceptance and normally will be displaced only by other Category I investigations.

(2) Category II—Well conceived and scientifically or technically sound investigations which are recommended for acceptance, but at a lower priority than Category I.

(3) Category III—Scientifically and technically sound investigations which require further development. Category III investigations may be funded for development and may be reconsidered at a later time for the same or other opportunities.

(4) Category IV—Proposed investigations which are recommended for rejection for the particular opportunity under consideration, whatever the reason.

(f) A record of the deliberations of the subcommittee shall be prepared by the assigned executive secretary and shall be signed by the Chairperson. The

1872.403-2

minutes shall contain the categorizations with basic rationale for such ratings and the significant strengths and weaknesses of the proposals evaluated.

1872.403-2 Contractor evaluation process.

(a) The use of the contractor method for obtaining support for evaluation purposes of proposals received in response to an AO requires the approval of the Program AA. Prior to the use of this method, discussion should be held with the Office of Acquisition.

(b) It is NASA policy to avoid situations in the acquisition process where, by virtue of the work or services performed for NASA, or as a result of data acquired from NASA or from other entities, a particular company:

(1) Is given an unfair competitive advantage over other companies with respect to future NASA business;

(2) Is placed in position to affect Government actions under circumstances in which there is potential that the company's judgment may be biased; or

(3) Otherwise finds that a conflict exists between the performance of work or services for the Government in an impartial manner and the company's own self-interest.

(c) To reduce the possibility of an organizational conflict of interest problem arising, the following minimum restrictions will be incorporated into the contract:

(1) No employee of the contractor will be permitted to propose in response to the AO;

(2) The "Limitation on Future Contracting" clause contained in 1852.209-71 will be included in all such contracts; and

(3) Unless authorized by the NASA contracting officer, the contractor shall not contact the originator of any proposal concerning its contents.

(d) The scope of work for the selected contractor will provide for an identification of strengths and weaknesses and a summary of the proposals. The contractor will not make selections nor recommend investigations.

(e) The steps to be taken in establishing evaluation panels and the responsibilities of NASA and the contractor in relation to the panels will be as follows:

48 CFR Ch. 18 (10-1-02 Edition)

(1) The contractor will be required to establish and provide support to panels of experts for review of proposals to evaluate their scientific and technical merit;

(2) These panels will be composed of scientists and specialists qualified to evaluate the proposals;

(3) The agency may provide to the contractor lists of scientist(s) and specialist(s) in the various disciplines it believes are qualified to serve on the panels;

(4) The contractor will report each panel's membership to NASA for approval; and

(5) The contractor must make all the necessary arrangements with the panel members.

(f) The evaluation support by the contractor's panels of experts will be accomplished as follows:

(1) The panels will review the scientific and technical merit of the proposals in accordance with the evaluation criteria in the AO and will record their strengths and weaknesses;

(2) The contractor will make records of each panel's deliberations which will form the basis for a report summarizing the results of the evaluations. Upon request, the contractor shall provide all such records to NASA;

(3) The chairperson of each panel shall certify that the evaluation report correctly represents the findings of the review panel; and

(4) A final report will be submitted as provided in the contract.

(g) A subcommittee of the Program Office Steering Committee will be established on an ad hoc basis. Utilizing furnished data, the subcommittee will classify the proposals into the four categories enumerated in 1872.403-1(e)(1), Advisory Subcommittee Evaluation Process. A record of the deliberations of the subcommittee should be prepared by an assigned executive secretary and signed by the chairperson. The minutes should contain the categorizations with the basic rationale for such ratings and the significant strengths and weaknesses of the proposals evaluated.

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