

Infrastructure Telecommunications and Broadcasting Period Offer

Generic Debrief to Tenderers

1. Overview

1.1 AusAID wishes to thank all who tendered for the Telecommunications and Broadcasting Period Offer which was advertised on 25 July and closed on 4 September 2001.

1.2 The tender proved very productive for AusAID attracting 27 complying tenders from individuals, firms, institutions and organisations, nominating 86 individuals. The high overall quality of tenders provided a very competitive field and allowed AusAID, with the assistance of the Technical Assessment Panel (TAP), to make clear distinctions in relation to tender quality and between individuals nominated.

1.3 In the Request for Tender (RFT), AusAID advised that it would provide tenderers with a generic debriefing within 30 days of Tenderers being notified of the outcome of the tender process. Accordingly, the following summary of the common strengths and weaknesses of the tenders received (as identified by the TAP) is provided to assist tenderers to formulate future AusAID tenders.

1.4 Period Offer Deeds have been offered to all tenderers which were rated technically suitable by the TAP.

1.5 A number of tenders (and individuals included in tenders) were not rated technically suitable by the TAP. Accordingly, many tenderers have not been awarded PO Deeds and many of the Deeds awarded do not include all of the individuals nominated.

2. About the Technical Assessment Panel (TAP)

2.1 The TAP comprised appropriately qualified AusAID representatives and independent external individuals/specialists contracted for the purpose. The TAP members ranked tenders and individuals on the basis of their technical merit based on tender content against AusAID's specifications as set out in the Terms of Reference (TOR) contained within the RFT. The following summarises TAP member comments on the common strengths and weaknesses of the tenders received.

3. Inclusions Which Strengthened or Weakened Tenders

General Comment

Strong Tenders

3.1 In broad terms the TAP found that tenders which rated well in the technical assessment generally:

- were prepared with the reader in mind i.e. were logically and clearly set out presenting the information in an easily accessible manner to give TAP members the maximum opportunity to consider the tender and to rate it against others;
- were clear about what was required and when referring to individuals:
 - used project examples to demonstrate their claims against each selection criterion;
 - clearly identified their role in any given process;
 - identified any special expertise they may have had;
- fully complied with AusAID's documentation requirements as set out in Tender Schedule B of the RFT;
- tailored the content of Curriculum Vitae and Experience Data Sheets to the TOR and Selection Criteria;
- fully addressed **all** selection criteria in their response;
- were succinct, only including relevant information; and
- demonstrated their understanding of the selection criteria.

Weaker Tenders

3.2 The TAP found that tenders which rated poorly in the technical assessment generally:

- were not well structured making it difficult for the reader to find key sections;
- did not show an appreciation that the technical proposal (or response) was the key document and depended largely on what was contained in CVs of nominated individuals;
- were overly brief in presenting their personnel in their response and so "undersold" themselves;
- claimed that individuals had particular experience but failed to provide supporting evidence;
- often used the same words to respond to all or a number of the selection criteria for all or several nominees. This tended to reflect adversely on the credibility of the tender as responses to Criterion B and C were required to be written by the individual; and
- restated AusAID goals/objectives in their comments to Criterion C rather than relating each individual's experience to the criteria.

Comments Against Selection Criteria

Selection Criterion A(i) for Individuals and A(ii) from Firms, Organisations or Institutions – (office, administrative and financial support capacity)

3.3 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- addressed all elements of the criterion and particularly their financial support capacity;
- demonstrated their capacity and approach to managing individuals contracted through the PO, including their proposed mobilization procedures identifying:
 - issues (such as obtaining visas, travel and health insurance) and illustrated their experience in dealing with factors which can delay mobilization;
 - the briefing of consultants to give a clear understanding of the assignment, AusAID and partner government's requirements along with reporting requirements and details of security considerations (where appropriate);
 - details of in-house team management expertise along with backstopping arrangements (technical and professional) including support in Australia and overseas;
 - the debriefing of consultants and an evaluation of the activity on the completion of the assignment with the recording of lessons learned; and
- provided details of their office accommodation (including access to offices overseas), systems (including any IT networking arrangements) and reporting arrangements.

3.4 An example of a sound approach which demonstrated an understanding of the key issues was:

- “.. (Company's) experience working in a variety of capacities and locations enables us to rapidly induct, equip and mobilize large teams. Procedures for medical and evacuation insurances, petty cash, temporary bank accounts, contract agreements, etc can all be quickly invoked.”.

Selection Criterion A(i) – For Firms, Organisations or Institutions (demonstrated capacity to access additional Personnel)

3.5 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- provided adequate information on their access to additional resources either from consultants employed in other affiliated offices or listed on their data bases;

3.6 Tenders which did not rate as well against this criterion:

- failed to provide specific information to demonstrate their capacity to access personnel, often choosing instead to rely on the reputation of the firm or indicating that the firm's own resources were such as to meet all possible contingencies; or
- claimed that they had access to additional resources but did not demonstrate how they would be accessed.

Selection Criterion A(ii) For Individuals and A(iii) For Firms, Organisations and Institutions (production of high quality documentation)

3.7 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- described their QA system and demonstrated its effectiveness by providing an adequately bound tender containing an accurate table of contents, consistency of language (i.e. first or third person) and no typographical, editorial or formatting errors;
- explained the processes and practices in place to ensure that documents are of high quality or described any arrangements with sub-contractors for quality control of documentation;
- referred to notable, substantial and even award-winning reports produced previously;
- referred to professional affiliations that require certain standards of document preparation and presentation;
- defined acronyms on first use; and
- detailed IT, report preparation and any other technical facilities available.

Selection Criterion B(i) (formal qualifications)

3.8 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- noted the importance of on-going professional development and provided evidence of additional training in cross-cutting areas (such as Gender and Development (GAD) and project management);
- possessed relevant qualifications in a resource management-related area consistent with the relevant “Telecommunications and Broadcasting” sub-sector; and
- stated the thesis topic for those with post-graduate qualifications;

Selection Criterion B(ii) (up-to-date knowledge and specialist skills)

3.9 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- demonstrated current knowledge and a recognition of the specialist skills required in the appropriate Telecommunications and Broadcasting sub-sector;
- demonstrated an ability to apply their knowledge in practice (for example through long and short-term consultancies);
- presented sufficient information to enable an assessment of the individual’s claims;
- prepared CVs and project data sheets which related nominated individuals’ experience and skills to the requirements of both the RFT/TOR and the specific sub-sector;
- demonstrated a record of work experience (including overseas consultancies) in the sub-sector; and
- did not simply repeat a listing of assignments from their CV.

3.10 The most common weaknesses in tenders that did not score as well against this

criterion were those which:

- were poorly presented or provided inadequate evidence of individuals' experience or qualifications to substantiate claims;
- responded only by listing the organizations where they had worked or the positions they had held rather than setting out their achievements and detailing how their experience related to the specific professional experience required; and
- tended to assume that senior experience (e.g. CEO, senior executive, senior consultant, senior academic) was self explanatory combined with a failure to expand the relevance of particular skills and experience to the selection criteria;

Selection Criterion B(iii) (ability to apply knowledge in practice)

3.11 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- demonstrated current knowledge and a recognition of the specialist skills required in the relevant sub-sector; and
- demonstrated an ability to apply their knowledge in practice (for example through long and short-term consultancies on through teaching personnel).

Selection Criterion B(iv) (problem solving skills, especially in the context and conditions prevailing in developing countries)

3.12 Tenders which rated well against this criterion:

- linked their experience and expertise with the context of conditions in developing countries;
- where experience in developing countries was lacking, demonstrated that they had and understanding of relevant developing country issues and showed how their skills could be adapted to meet the PO needs;
- related their work experience, for example with small remote communities in Australia, to similar contexts in developing countries;
- demonstrated work experience in developing countries or isolated communities; and
- did not simply repeat a listing of assignments from their CV.

3.13 Weaker tenders:

- did not clearly demonstrate how their problem solving skills could be transferred and applied in the developing country context; and
- provided generic responses rather than addressing the detail of the criterion.

Selection Criterion C(i) (oral and written communication skills)

3.14 Higher scoring tenders:

- exhibited strong skills by referring to specific examples;
- used gender neutral language;
- considered more general issues of communication in different and difficult environments;
- gave examples of the application of a systematic approach to developing solutions to overcome communication challenges or gaps in a particular environment;
- demonstrated relevant language skills beyond English; and
- provided illustrations of their negotiating skills and evidence of effectively presenting relevant material to decision makers.

3.15 Lower scoring tenders:

- focused on the production of written material and did not give adequate reference to oral communication;
- simply provided a career history; and
- did not set out relevant examples of their work.

Selection Criterion C(ii) (interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity and ability to interact effectively)

3.16 Higher scoring tenders:

- indicated a familiarity with the sensitivities of cross-cultural work (whether in Australia or in developing countries) and the development of an approach to overcoming those sensitivities;
- outlined their successes in dealing with interpersonal issues; and
- provided examples of negotiations they participated in and the outcomes of such negotiations;

3.17 Lower scoring tenders:

- did not address all aspects of the selection criteria;
- made very brief statements which were not backed up by examples; and
- provided generic responses rather than addressing the required aspects of the criterion.

Selection Criterion C(iii) (need to integrate gender, environment and community development policies)

3.18 Stronger responses demonstrated knowledge of the particular policies, an understanding of the issues associated with their application and provided specifics of gender awareness or environmental training. Sound examples:

- described situations which brought into play gender, environment and community development issues and their personal role in these situations;
- discussed different perceptions of these issues within different communities; and
- used their personal experiences or backgrounds to underpin their statements relating to these issues.

3.19 Weaker responses:

- simply noted/restated AusAID policy;
- made brief one or two sentence statements claiming full appreciation of relevant AusAID policies without demonstrating this appreciation, i.e.
 - "...I am well aware of the importance to integrate gender, environment and community development policies to attain sustainable growth and stability";
 - "...understands and supports the need to integrate gender, environmental and community development policies and initiatives in AusAID programs and projects";
- failed to address all aspect of the criteria;
- treated gender as relating to EEO or "gender balance" rather than demonstrating an appreciation of the wider gender issues as they relate to developing countries;
- simply equated "community development" with "community consultation"; and
- failed to provide any clear evidence that the consultant had direct experience, understanding and/or training in these areas.

Selection Criterion C(iv) (capacity to lead and/or participate in teams)

3.20 The more successful tenders:

- presented evidence of experience as a team leader/member over a range of projects;
- clearly identified the individual's role in any activity;
- showed an appreciation of the need for different skills in different team roles and gave examples of their experience in these roles;
- provided evidence of the successful management of multi disciplinary teams; and
- pointed to successful involvement in projects where collaboration within or across disciplines was required.

3.21 Weaker tenders:

- tended to assume that their capacity in this area was (or would be) understood from a broad statement of experience;
- did not address all of the issues – i.e. leadership, teamwork and design, monitoring and evaluation;
- mentioned teams in which they had participated but did not identify their roles in the team; and
- asserted that they had management skills but failed to demonstrate them.

Selection Criterion C(v) (knowledge of the goals, objectives and principles of Australia's aid program)

3.22 Higher scoring tenders:

- provided examples of AusAID projects in which they had participated and explained how this experience had built up their appreciation of AusAID objectives and principles;
- drew on their experience on projects in developing countries to build up their knowledge of AusAID objectives and principles; and
- outlined how they had built up this knowledge through briefings, through association with company personnel, who had first hand knowledge of these objectives and principles, or through other circumstances.

3.23 Lower scoring tenders:

- did not address this criterion at all; and
- were very brief, dismissive or claimed a full appreciation/understanding without providing any substantiation.