

2 March 2015

California Energy Commission
1516 9th Street
Sacramento CA 95814

Mr. Harland,

I'm writing as an individual who has worked on at least eight EPIC proposals, as both a Prime and a major subcontractor to another Prime, and appreciate the opportunity to give feedback on the EPIC solicitation process. I will confine my comments to the actual proposal requirements and the manner in which EPIC proposals must be submitted. In short, there is room for streamlining the process and requirements for submitting EPIC proposals, which would allow respondents to spend more time creating quality proposals and less time trying to conform to administrative requirements.

First and foremost, recommend the CEC move to electronic proposal submissions. The amount of time and resources needed to print 9 hardcopies, of multiple form types while ensuring no printer malfunctions, no skipped pages, and then getting each copy bound is excessive and expensive, and detracts from proposal quality while wasting much paper. Both DOE EERE and DOD's ESTCP offices use electronic submission systems that work quite well, and I strongly encourage CEC to adopt one of their systems to save development costs and expedite the adoption process; there's no need to reinvent a new process when a pretty good one already exists. Please also note the importance of accepting proposals in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format. Wet-signed letters of support/commitment from supporting organizations are almost always transmitted as .pdfs, and converting them back to MS Word format is cumbersome and time consuming.

Recommend the CEC answer questions from proposed respondents up until, or very near, the proposal due date. In PON 13-301, for example, the deadline for submitting written questions was almost three months before the deadline for submitting proposals, long before most teams had fully engaged in proposal development. Respondents will almost certainly have questions as they build proposals, but have no mechanism for getting them answered. There are two options to rectify this: DOE EERE allows respondents to submit electronic questions at any time, with the question and answer loaded onto a dynamic, constantly-updated site on its web page, making both the question and the answer available to all. Other sponsoring agencies will answer emails or phone calls, up to the proposal due date; as long as questions are administrative or procedural, they are helpful. Whichever process the CEC adopts, I recommend allowing questions as late in the process as possible.

Recommend the CEC relax its format-driven pass-fail scoring system, as it potentially deprives the state from considering extremely strong proposals. For example, I know of two bidders who were disqualified at the full proposal stage for only submitting two, vice the required three, references, or forgetting to append references from a proposed subcontractor/project partner. These were oversights not noticed in the run-up to proposal submission that could have been fixed easily and quickly. Rather than disqualify the respondents, the CEC could have called or written the Prime and requested the

references. It would have taken a small amount of CEC time, but that seems preferable to automatically disqualifying what may have been outstanding proposals.

Moving to the PONs themselves, I recommend they be restructured somewhat. Information important to bidders is buried inside the PON, rather than being up front. Recommend a table with key information: deadlines, project lengths, submission amounts, etc. on page one of the PON. In 13-301, part of that is on page six, and part on page eight. Additionally, understanding the level of technological readiness under CEC PONs is quite opaque. Some organizations use the Technological Readiness Level (TRL) scale to describe their requirements; that might be useful in CEC PONs as well.

Finally, I think proposal submissions require too many forms, which adds to proposal complexity and excessive bureaucratic actions. I understand the need for references, descriptions of the project team, work product samples, and support/commitment letters. The requirement to append a form to each of those contributes to the amount of administrative input required to submit proposals.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide feedback, and I appreciate the Commission's desire to improve the process.

Regards,

Jim Rix