

A-E Contracting

Frequently Asked Questions

Southern Division

Naval Facilities Engineering Command

1. What Does Your Future Workload Look Like? We depend on the Congress to authorize and appropriate military construction work so we cannot predict with any certainty when and where specific projects will be constructed. With recent emphasis on spending reduction and with our base closure work nearing completion, our normal facility design workload will be significantly down. The long term future will most probably focus on repairs, alterations and renovations of existing facilities.

2. How Many A-E Contracts Does The Southern Division Let A Year? SouthDiv primarily uses Indefinite Delivery Requirements (IDR) contracts and Indefinite Quantity (IQ) contracts for A-E services. We currently have approximately 34 IDR contracts. The number of A-E contracts is also affected by the trend toward more design-build contracts. These are long term contracts (up to five years) that include design services for a particular activity, geographic region, or design specialty. This allows us to develop long term working relationships with our A-E suppliers and has resulted in a significant improvement over the way we used to conduct business. Occasionally we will award an A-E contract for design of a single project. The number of contracts awarded per year varies significantly depending upon when our IDR and IQ contracts expire.

3. How Does Your Selection Process Work? Our selection process is conducted in accordance with Public Law 92-582 (40 USC 541-544), commonly called the Brooks Act, which became law on October 27, 1972. Specific procedures for implementing this Public Law are contained in the

Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 36. Generally the steps are as follows:

- a. Advertise in the Commerce Business Daily (CBD). If the estimated fee for a proposed professional engineering and architectural service contract is expected to exceed \$25,000, we are required to advertise in the CBD. These advertisements list the scope of the project and the location of the office doing the selection.
- b. Accept applications.
- c. Slate (Preselect) Committee reviews all applications and recommends a short list.
- d. Selection Board interviews and recommends a minimum of three qualified firms in order of most qualified, second most qualified, and third most qualified.

4. How Do I Apply? We strongly suggest you get a **complete** copy of the advertisement published in the Commerce Business Daily. Don't rely on shortened versions published by others! An application should contain the items as listed in the CBD ad. Remember, we use the selection criteria that we publish in the CBD as a basis for evaluating each firm, so pay close attention to addressing those criteria. As for SF254's, we like to have one on each production office, including consultants. If you have a SF254 on file with us that is less than one year old, include only page 4 with your SF255.

5. What Do You Look For In Our Application?

Primarily, we are trying to determine the degree of relevancy of the proposed design team's qualifications and experience to our project. The basic steps are as follows: (1) We look at your response to our CBD ad to determine the experience relevant to our project. We would prefer you follow the specific instructions published in the CBD ad rather than submitting a "generic" SF255. We need a mental picture of each project you submit as relevant experience. Do not be afraid to use square feet, square yards, gallons per day, number of stories, numbers of beds, or any other terms commonly used in the profession. Registered architects and engineers are reviewing your application and can very easily understand you. (2) We look at your response to our CBD ad to see who is going to be assigned to our project. Include the key decision makers and major contributors for every discipline necessary for our project. We look to verify that the professional qualifications and prior design experience of these individuals match the projects you listed as relevant experience. (3) We look at Block 4 (personnel by discipline) to determine if sufficient numbers and types of people are available for this project. In addition, we are interested in your ability to assign qualified replacements for team members who may not be available. Block 4 should include all disciplines available -- both consultant and prime. Do not try to be deceiving. Use an asterisk or parenthesis, if necessary, to indicate which disciplines are the primes and which are the consultants. Also, differentiate between branch offices within a firm. (4) Depending on the published selection criteria, we will look at other portions of the SF255 to confirm the applicant meets those criteria.

6. What Is Your Policy Concerning Joint Ventures? All Joint Venture parties are expected to make a meaningful contribution. We are not interested in Joint Ventures solely for the purpose of receiving a local mailing address. Previous Department of Defense awards to constituent Joint

Venture members are combined into one total for the Joint Venture. We encourage smaller firms to form joint ventures where there is a need to address larger projects and multiple projects, but only to the extent where the joint venture firms or key team members have had some experience working together in the past.

7. Is It Important To Be Close To The Project Site? Location of the firm is one of the selection criteria, but the relative importance to other criteria varies with each project. Local firms are keenly aware of local conditions, environmental requirements, and site peculiarities. In some local areas, there may be trade practices with construction prime and subcontractors which would have a direct bearing on a project. However, we will not award a contract to a firm just because it is local. Ultimately, we want a quality design and facility.

8. Can I Go Look At The Project Site? We would prefer you not go while preparing your SF255. It simply will not have any impact on that list of projects you are going to give us as relevant experience. Certainly if our CBD ad has not answered an important question for you, call the point of contact listed in the CBD ad, and we will provide the answers for you. However, we do believe there is some value, for the short listed firms, to visit the site prior to an interview.

9. How Do You Treat Individual Experience Earned With Another Firm? We are hiring design professionals for our work. A firm *per se* has no design experience. We want to hire design professionals with a demonstrated record. The individuals you propose to work on our project must have the experience you indicated in Block 8. Larger firms tend to claim corporate experience in lieu of individual experience. Indicating individual experience while with another firm is acceptable as long as it is explained. Individuals design projects; corporations do not.

10. How Many People Are Enough? There is no single answer to that question. The necessary design professionals to produce design calculations and conceptual designs must be available in addition to those who produce the drawings and specifications. We have no magic graph, chart or table that says "x" bodies per million dollars of construction. The individual committee and board members determine how many is enough. In doing so, they consider many factors including project complexity, schedule, other work being done by the firm, CAD capabilities, ability to sustain the loss of key personnel, etc.

11. Should I Send Pictures And Brochures With My Application? If the picture is relevant, send it! Don't go to any special effort, but where pictures are important to help describe your qualifications, experience and relevant projects, we encourage you to include them. We don't need fancy covers, dividers, or binders. These applications should not be a burden to you, either in time or money.

12. What Kind Of Presentation Works Best For Interviews? We conduct interviews in person or by telephone depending upon the nature and scope of the work. Your interview will be with registered architects and engineers who have similar training and experience as you. Organize yourself around and respond to each of the selection criteria published in the CBD. Use any kind of presentation that you feel comfortable with. Generally, we need solid content relevant to the published evaluation criteria rather than slick presentations or "Dog and Pony Shows". You need to convey to the selection board the feeling that you understand our needs and you know how to satisfy us.

13. Do I Have To Come To The Southern Division And Visit Regularly To Get Work With You? No! Your applications are the key. The CBD ad will identify your point of contact for contracts in the selection phase. You are discouraged from trying to make contact with any

other committee or board member from the time the project is advertised in the CBD until an A-E is selected.

14. Can My Congressman Help Me Get A Job? While you have the right to solicit his/her help, the selection process is not politically oriented. It is purely a professional competition.

15. How Do You Interface With Local Bases And Their A-E Selection Process? We encourage local bases to utilize our IDR and IQ contracts. However, local bases often contract independently for their projects. When this is done they will issue their own CBD announcement. Generally, they will follow the same rules as we do.

16. What Is Your Policy With Respect To Spreading The Workload? We are always interested in awarding work to new firms including minority firms and small businesses. Prior DoD awards do not automatically preclude a firm from being considered or being eligible for selection. Normally, prior awards only come into play when we determine that a number of firms appear to have approximately the same qualifications. They do not receive the same emphasis as previous experience or professional qualifications. If you have not done work with us recently, it is even more important that you tailor your SF255 to show us that your team has relevant experience and can do a quality job. It's always important to show us why you believe the projects you submitted are relevant to the criteria contained in the CBD ad, but you should really focus on explaining why any non DoD projects, used as experience, are relevant to our work.

17. How Much Design Does The Southern Division Do In-House? In the past, our in-house work has varied from 10-25%, but the amount of in-house work we do varies significantly with the size of our programs and with the need to keep a technically competent staff. Our philosophy regarding in-house design is that we try to perform

enough work in-house to train our younger architects and engineers as well as to keep all of our personnel abreast of the state-of-the-art.

18. How Much Technical Guidance Can I Expect If I Get A Contract With The Southern Division?

Most of our technical staff are either professional engineers or registered architects. The individuals stay closely involved with their projects by means of conferences, periodic reviews and similar actions. While we do not attempt to restrict a designer's freedom unnecessarily, we do have high standards, and we devote a significant amount of effort to guiding A-E firms to ensure conformance with criteria, good engineering practice, and our professional preferences.

19. What Do You Expect Of A-E's Doing Work For The Southern Division?

We expect quality design work, performed on schedule, and within budget. Specifically, our objective is to provide facilities that are aesthetically pleasing, functional, maintainable, cost effective and readily constructible. We are also vitally interested in energy efficient designs and designs that meet environmental constraints and regulations.

20. How Do You Negotiate Your Contracts?

First, we develop a detailed Government estimate as if we were going to design the project in-house. We will ask you to prepare your proposal on the same forms we use. When we receive your proposal, we will compare each element to that of the Government estimate to insure there is a clear understanding of the services required. Any difference will be discussed and resolved. Although most contracts are awarded on a lump sum, fixed-price basis, allowances can be made for unknowns. Special conditions have to be agreed to at the time of negotiations and documented. Although it rarely happens, we can go to the next most qualified firm identified during the selection process if we fail to reach a fair and reasonable price.

21. Does Price Ever Enter Into The Selection Process?

Never! The A-E selection process is solely a professional qualifications based competition. However, once the selection process is complete, we are charged with negotiating a "fair and reasonable" fee with the selected firm. We interpret the expression "fair and reasonable" to mean fair and reasonable to both the Government and the A-E firm, given our past experience with the A-E industry.

22. How Do I Get Feedback On My Application If I'm Not Slated Or Selected?

If you desire a debriefing for a particular slate or selection action, please call or write the point of contact listed in the CBD ad to arrange a time and place for discussion.

23. Can I Talk With Members Of The Slate Or Selection Boards Prior To Their Convening?

Absolutely not!! The members of our boards are prohibited from giving any information to prospective A-E firms. Giving an A-E firm information without publishing that same information to all prospective firms is considered preferential treatment, which violates the Federal Acquisition Regulations. All questions, prior to announcement of the selection, must be directed to the point of contact listed in the CBD ad. That person will determine if we need to clarify or amend the CBD ad.

24. What is your position on Sustainable Design & how should I address it?

Our emphasis on sustainable design reflects an increased commitment to the principles of environmental stewardship and conservation. Our policy is to incorporate sustainability principles and concepts in the design of all facilities and infrastructure projects to the fullest extent possible, consistent with budget constraints and customer requirements. A/Es should be developing the capability to respond to Sustainable Design as a selection criteria. This means understand the concept, develop the expertise, and provide a project team that uses an integrated design approach, where the evaluation of

any building element, material or system is not viewed solely on the basis of its own isolated merits, but is evaluated as an integrated part of the entire building or infrastructure system.. The end game in best value awards is not necessarily first cost, but rather lowest life cycle cost. Competitive proposals will result from integrated design solutions that incorporate sustainability principles.

25. Who Do I Talk To If I Have Further

Questions? If you need further general information, please contact Kristy Penninger, telephone (843) 820-5935 or email penningerkp@efdsouth.navfac.navy.mil. If you have questions regarding a specific CBD announcement, please contact the person listed as the point of contact in the CBD ad.