



## Soliciting Contractor Bids

January 2019 in our *Focus on Facilities* Asset Management column we discussed “Scoring the 5 Project Delivery Methods” and in March 2020 we addressed “Writing a Request for Proposal” (RFP) and so this month we will discuss the third phase of a building program, Writing a Request for Bid (RFB). This particular topic was requested from readers who completed our survey asking for feedback to our columns.

Going back to the topic of Project Delivery, the first phase of a building program determining which approach is the optimum method to design and construct the building program. For the Diocese the consensus is that Construction Management (CM) is the preferred method, and this was described as, “...it is always recommended that the more teamwork that occurs throughout the project the better the project delivery method results will be. It is for that reason that Construction Management should be considered the recommended project delivery for building construction so as to control project scope, costs, and timeline.”

Next in the building program process is to write an RFP to be sent to a list of prequalified design teams and from this process the building committee will be able to select the optimum group of professionals to create the design, and document this design on to contract drawings and into contract specifications that will define the scope of work in great detail. A second RFP will be sent out to prequalified CM firms to again select the optimum construction manager team member to work with the building program committee and the design team in the production of contract documents. As part of this design phase the CM will provide budget estimates and construction timeline to complete the work, as well as provide their experience in the constructability of the design features.

Late in the development of the contract documents will be the discussion to solicit bids from prequalified contractors who will be hired under the CM firm to



provide the services needed to complete the installation of this project. These RFBs will be sent out to the numerous trades that make up a construction project e.g., masonry, carpentry, plumbing, heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC), and electrical to mention just five of the required installers.

So what does an RFB look like? Well the CM firm will take the lead on drafting a series of RFB's which each RFB sharing common information such as the name of the project, the building owner, the design consultants, and the CM firm. Other information will be the location and empty site prepared for construction of a new building or an existing building to be renovated and/or a building addition added on to the existing building. The estimated construction timeline, possibly noting the work will be completed as a single project or done in phases e.g., early site construction, building core and shell along with the mechanical and electrical system infrastructure followed by tenant fit-out of space and extension of the associated building systems.

Unlike an RFP that will provide a preliminary outline of the client's project requirements for the proposed project, the RFB will be far more specific and will include contract documents consisting of design drawings and specifications. Years past this RFB would include printed drawings, specifications, and instructions to bidders. In recent years with contractors interested in quoting a price to complete the work e.g., HVAC contractor to furnish and install the HVAC systems, the CM firm will post these contract documents on a file transfer protocol (FTP) site. An FTP is used for the transfer of computer files from the CM's computer server to prospective bidders' computers via the Internet. This FTP site is built on a server model architecture using separate control and data connections. The Internet site will provide the CM and all interested contractors a means to exchange files between computer accounts, transferring files to the bidder's desktop computer. Contractors are experienced enough to know that these FTP sites are heavily used and may require several attempts before connecting but it is an efficient means to transfer information as well as eliminating the use of large volume of paper each time information is transferred. Often contract drawings can take the shape of 200 drawings at 36" by 24" along with 2-volumes of contract specifications each 300 pages per volume so one could classify the FTP site a "green" site.

Also included in this electronic RFB will be various forms to be filled out by each bidding contractor acknowledging receipt of the contract documents, bidder instructions, acknowledgement of any changes to the contract documents known as addendums, and other completed forms to make each bid a legal documented agreement between the CM and the bidder.

Integral with the contract specification will be a Division 1 specifying requirements on how the project will proceed including requirements to meet during construction, project closeout criteria e.g., submission of operation and maintenance (O&M) manuals, training of the building owner's O&M staff, etc.

This RFB will usually have supplementary conditions that follow directly after the Division 1 criteria that will be project-specific such as this building program requires 3<sup>rd</sup> party commissioning of the mechanical and electrical systems by specifying the contractors who furnish and install these systems shall be required to demonstrate

the system performance to this 3<sup>rd</sup> party commissioning agent.

As a rule, submitting professional references by the bidding contractors are not usually required because CM firms are familiar with these contractors based on their own past experience with the contractors. That said, references may be required on occasion depending on the scope of work e.g., stainless steel piping fabrication, installation, and certification of this installation at a new pharmaceutical construction site. Other requirements may be directed to the hiring of minorities and/or WBE (women business enterprise) certification compliance.

The contractor's bid will most likely breakout the quote so that specific notes and exceptions are stated, such as potential additional costs, potential deduct costs, reimbursement costs, and required payment timeline e.g., payment in 30-days from date of contractor payment invoice.

The CM's project manager will compile and organize the contractor bids into the appropriate categories e.g., HVAC, fire protection, etc. and then call some if not all the bidders with any questions the CM firm may have to finalize and qualify the specific bids. Once completed the CM's project manager will submit the bids to the design team and the client for their review and comment. Once the entire team has completed the review of bids and based on the construction start date, the CM will need to be authorized by the client to begin to sign contract agreements with the contractors being awarded their part of the project. After that, the construction of the project, using the design contract documents will begin.

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