

GUIDELINE ON PROPOSAL EVALUATION and SELECTION PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide a process for the evaluation and selection of proposals. The process rests on a number of well-established principles:

- 1) **QUALITY:** Projects selected for funding must demonstrate a high scientific, technical and managerial quality in the context of the objectives of the CEMA program in question.
- 2) **TRANSPARENCY:** In order to provide a clear framework for researchers preparing proposals for funding and for reviewers evaluating proposals, the process of reaching those decisions must be clearly described and available to any interested party.
- 3) **EQUALITY OF TREATMENT:** A fundamental principle of CEMA support is that all proposals should be treated alike, irrespective of where they originate or the identity of the proposers.
- 4) **IMPARTIALITY:** All proposals are treated impartially on their merits.
- 5) **EFFICIENCY AND SPEED:** The procedures have been designed to be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, appropriate use of CEMA funds and respecting the legal framework within which the specific program is managed.
- 6) **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:** Any proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded from being evaluated or selected at any time.

All proposals that fulfil the eligibility criteria are evaluated to determine their quality.

ROLE OF REVIEWER:

- The role of a reviewer is to participate in a confidential, fair and equitable evaluation of each proposal according to the procedures described in this guide and in any program specific evaluation document. He/she must use their best endeavours to achieve this, follow any instructions given by CEMA to this end and deliver a constant and high quality of work.
- The reviewer works as an independent person. He/she is deemed to work in a personal capacity and in performing the work, does not represent any organisation.
- The reviewer accepts the principle of confidentiality before starting the work.
- Reviewers may not communicate with proposers directly.
- Where it has been decided that proposals are to be posted or made available electronically to reviewers, the reviewer will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent and returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation. Reviewers may not show the contents of proposals or information on proposers to third parties without the express written approval of CEMA.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

When appointing a reviewer, CEMA must take all reasonable steps to ensure that he/she is not faced with a conflict of interest in relation to the proposals on which he/she is required to give an opinion. To this end CEMA requires reviewers to make such a declaration that no such conflict of interest exists at the time of their appointment and that they undertake to inform CEMA if one should arise in the course of their duties. This should be recorded in the notes of the meeting.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

As they will be entrusted with or have access to information of a proprietary and confidential nature reviewers must be aware of the need for confidentiality. Review committee members will be expected to:

- Keep the proposals and any notes pertaining to the proposal in a secure place where others do not have access to them;
- Not discuss the proposals or disclose their contents with anyone but other committee members;
- Evaluate proposals strictly in accordance with the provided CEMA evaluation criteria;

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- Evaluate proposals solely on the information contained therein and;
- Score proposals strictly in accordance with the established point ratings.

REVIEW GROUP COMPOSITIONS:

- As per the RFP procedures document, “The Task Group reviews the proposals using the CEMA Proposal Ranking Template.”
- The Secretariat may also be represented as part of the review group.
- If the evaluation team is too large it becomes difficult to operate efficiently and effectively.
- A minimum of three Reviewers will examine each eligible proposal submitted to CEMA, with three to five as a core team usually working well.
- Typically, the Program Administrator will lead the evaluation effort.
- The Technical Lead and other core team members will be involved through the entire evaluation process and must be involved in reviewing **all** proposals.
- The core team may draw upon other key resources in an advisory capacity, but it is the core team member’s responsibility to rate the proposal using the advisors input.

EVALUATION APPROACH:

OVERVIEW:

Reviewers must examine each proposal individually in detail to measure it against the evaluation factors and sub-factors. Using CEMA document “PROPOSAL RANKING TEMPLATE 070611” reviewers assign a rating and document the basis for the rating. This is the core of the evaluation process. Section 5 of this document details the template.

EVALUATION PROCESS:

The criteria used to evaluate each vendor should correspond with the criteria stated in the RFP as well as any best practice attributes of any methodologies, approaches, or plans, requested in the RFP.

FAMILIARIZATION:

Prior to receiving the proposals, each member of the proposal review team should become familiar with the RFP process, the requested information, the evaluation criteria, evaluation process and the rating system. The Program Administrator will check consultants on the CEMA contractor database and report any previous problems identified with the consultants.

REQUESTED INFORMATION:

Each proposal should be checked for its compliance with all RFP requests. Assessing the requests should be a matter of the proposal either meeting or not meeting each request; any proposal not fully meeting every one of the requests may be considered for rejection without further consideration. If no vendor proposals meet all requests then you may want to consider rethinking the RFP.

DOCUMENTING PROPOSAL AMBIGUITIES, DEFICIENCIES and INADEQUACIES:

Reviewers are asked to document problems in evaluating a proposal due to:

- Ambiguous language
- Unclear meaning
- Failed to respond to the RFP instructions
- Not enough information was provided to evaluate the proposed approach, etc.
- Information contains obvious flaws, errors or omissions that increase the risk of unsuccessful performance

One of the members of the evaluation committee (usually the Program Administrator) should be assigned the responsibility for making a master record of the scores and keeping notes explaining each score. It is important to record supporting comments for both high scores and low scores.

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IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES and RISKS:

Reviewers must identify and document, as part of the evaluation rating, strengths, weaknesses and risks. Numerical scores and ratings must be supported with specific details as to why the proposal is weak or risky. The strengths, weakness and risks form a large part of the selection rationale; however the fact that a proposal is deficient, weak or at risk in some areas does not mean that it should be excluded from further consideration.

COMMUNICATING WITH VENDORS:

Only the Program Administrator should coordinate communications with the vendors.

EVALUATION CONSENSUS:

The final rating of each proposal should be assigned by a majority of the reviewers. Simply averaging the scores is not necessarily a consensus. In cases where the reviewers are unable to reach agreement, without unreasonable delay to the process, the Executive Director has the authority to make the final decision.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION GUIDE:

This section should be used as a high level guide while reviewing vendor submitted information.

1) PROJECT MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE:

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation Guide
Organization and Experience	Does the consultant limit its work to specialized areas? Does the principal area of specialization match the area covered by the RFP? Does the company information indicate the consultant can handle the project size, scope and complexity?
Organization Size and Structure	Does this company have a history in this sector?
Roles & Responsibilities	Are roles and responsibilities clearly articulated for each project team member? Do the responsibilities make sense and are they achievable by the resources available?
Proposed Project Team & Resumes Review	Are all key personnel from vendor and subs and identified by name? Does the proposal include a completed resume for each named individual, showing that their level of education and experience are commensurate with the role and responsibilities the individual will be assigned to? And that their resumes indicate what project role the individual is undertaking.
Completeness of Vendor Response	Is it clear that the vendor understood all of the functional requirements? Did the vendor respond to all functional requirements?
Overall Quality and Professionalism	Does the response address the content of the RFP or is it a 'canned' response dealing primarily in generalizations?
Past Performance	Are full details of past performance provided? Details include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience with CEMA• Experience in the Region• Management of comparable project in size, scope and complexity
Related Engagements	Has performance in delivering quality services meeting technical, management cost and schedule requirements been described?

2) BUDGET:

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation Guide
Financial Viability	Does the organization have the resources to support this project?
Completeness of Vendor Response	Is it clear that the vendor understood all of the functional requirements? Did the vendor respond to all functional requirements?

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Fee Summary	The proposed fee should be evaluated to determine whether the proposed fee of the effort is complete, reasonable and/or realistic and to ensure all requirements are reflected in the fee proposal. Agreement between written proposal and fee shall be used to determine realism of the proposed fee. Does budget reflect proper involvement of key personnel?
Expenses	Expenses must be commensurate with CEMA standards at the time the project is bid.

3) CONTENT OF PROPOSAL:

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation Guide
Completeness: Well written and Professional	Were there any deficiencies, inadequacies and ambiguities? Was the proposal well laid out?
Overall Responsiveness Approach/Method Outlined and Addressed Clearly. Addresses RFP.	Does the response specifically address what was requested or were there alternate suggestions to what the RFP called for? Did the vendor understand what was being asked of them?
Application to This Project	Does the approach make sense in general? Does the approach make sense for this project? Does this approach support the goals of the project and CEMA? Does the approach fit with the culture of CEMA? Is the methodology easy to follow? Is this approach been proven successful on comparable projects? Implementation methodology/approach detail provided
Overall Understanding of Project Objectives	Does the proposal clearly depict a thorough understanding of the project and its objectives as well as the overall vision of the company?
Deliverables	Are the resultant deliverables sufficient to support this project? Do the deliverables support the goals of the project? Are the deliverables measurable?
High-Level Work Plan	Does work/project plan reflect the implementation methodology? Are all deliverables and milestones present? Do the high-level tasks make sense for the work to be done? Does the plan reflect a reasonable timeline? Are the task durations reasonable? Has this plan been successfully used on comparable projects?

4) SCHEDULE/TIMING:

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation Guide
Timeliness	Was the proposal submitted within the specified time period?
Phases	Are phases clearly defined? Is it clear when a phase ends/begins? Is it clear what work will be performed during each phase? Does each phase result in clearly defined deliverables?
Roll-Out Strategy	Is the strategy clearly defined? Does it make sense for the culture of CEMA? Is the timeline reasonable? Does this plan support the goals and vision of CEMA?
Milestones & Key Decision Points	Are milestones clearly defined and do they occur with a reasonable frequency? Have key decision points been defined?

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In addition to the above, the following considerations must be taken into account when reviewing a proposal:

EXPECTED CEMA DUTIES:

Are the duties the vendor expects CEMA to perform before, during or after the project reasonable, appropriate and achievable for CEMA? Are the expected duties adequately described?

RISK IDENTIFICATION:

Vendor has identified real and relevant risks with the project, their approach, CEMA constraints, etc. and has detailed proposed mitigation actions, impact and timeline for those risks. A vendor who says there is no risk present or has minimized potential risks should be scrutinized carefully as a failure or inability to identify potential risk will impact the success of the project.

PROFESSIONAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Vendor's who do not agree to use the standard fixed fee contract and/or who take a material exception to any of the terms and conditions of CEMA contracts, for which negotiation is not an option, should not be retained for future consideration.