**CON DBF: Contract Award Debriefing Workshop**

**Scenario One**

**Technical Support Services**

***Industry Participants***

*This training product was prepared for the Homeland Security Acquisition Institute*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[WORKSHOP OVERVIEW 2](#_Toc381704098)

[SCENARIO ONE OVERVIEW 3](#_Toc381704099)

[Request For Proposal Section L (Excerpt) 5](#_Toc381704100)

[Request For Proposal Section M (Excerpt) 8](#_Toc381704101)

[Price 9](#_Toc381704102)

[Basis for Award 9](#_Toc381704103)

[Evaluation Rating Scheme 10](#_Toc381704104)

[Gray space corporation discussion questions 12](#_Toc381704105)

[Additional Information 13](#_Toc381704106)

[PROPOSAL EXCERPTS 14](#_Toc381704107)

# WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The TREASURY Contract Award Debriefing Workshop is designed to provide participants with the tools needed to conduct effective oral debriefings and explanations of the basis for award. The workshop consists of a combination of facilitator-led training and role play exercises unique to the TREASURY mission with the hope that the skills learned in this workshop will encourage the TREASURY acquisition workforce to provide oral debriefings and explanations of the basis for award on a routine basis. The workshop will be divided into four parts as follows:

1. **Introduction**: Identifies the goals and expectations of the workshop followed by a video message from the TREASURY.
2. **Instruction**: Overview of policy and regulations, including the types of debriefings (pre-award and post award), explanation of the basis for award, as well as the “do’s and don’ts” for each. Instruction on preparing for an oral debriefing including best practices and proper use of terminology is also provided.
3. **Role Play:** Two role play scenarios that will include participation from the workshop attendees and industry representatives. Each role play will focus on a specific procurement type. Time will be allotted for audience members and industry participants to provide feedback at the conclusion of each role play.

Selected workshop participants will be assigned one of two role play scenarios describing a fictitious procurement that challenges them to apply their knowledge and expertise in a realistic oral debriefing setting. The role play will be conducted in a discussion-oriented format in which participants will be expected to act out how they would conduct themselves during a real-life oral debriefing. The roles are purposely not scripted. Participants are to prepare for their roles by reading the materials provided prior to the workshop and coordinating their efforts with other role players assigned to their scenario.

Government participants will play one of the following roles: Contracting Officer and/or Contract Specialist, Chair of the Source Selection Evaluation Board, or Subject Matter Expert. They will be provided information on the offeror’s proposal, selected sections of the Request for Proposal (RFP), excerpts from the proposal, and information on how the proposal was evaluated. During the role play, participants will explain how evaluation factors were used to make the award, the results of the Government’s tradeoff analysis, and the role price played in the award decision. They should also prepare for potential questions from industry participants.

Industry participants will play multiple distinct roles: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Capture/Business Development representative, proposal manager, contracts manager, and/or legal counsel. They will be provided selected sections of the RFP and limited information about why their proposal was not selected for award.

1. **Conclusion:** Facilitated workshop wrap-up, including a discussion on best practices for debriefings and explanations as well as keys to success.

# SCENARIO ONE OVERVIEW

The TREASURY Cyber Undercover Bureau of Engagement (CUBE) has the need for technical services in support of its SharePoint site. Services require knowledge of custom code and a variety of hardware and middleware to support the CUBE mission. Market research determined the Government should award a single firm-fixed price contract and that the Request for Proposal (RFP) should be issued using full and open competition. Best value will be determined using the tradeoff process in accordance with FAR subpart 15.101-1. The details of the procurement are as follows:

* + - * The RFP was issued on January 1, 2013. Proposals were due from offerors no later than 5:00 PM EST on February 15, 2013.
* The RFP contemplates award of a Firm Fixed Price (FFP) contract with one base year and two options years. Price evaluation was inclusive of options, and the total evaluated price cited in this scenario is inclusive of options.
* The Government responded to over 25 questions submitted by various offerors by the date stipulated in the RFP.
* Three proposals were timely received in response to the RFP.
* The Government provided written discussion questions to Gray Space Corporation (GSC) and SSC Corporation on March 30, 2013. Final proposal revisions were due on April 30, 2013. Both offerors submitted revised technical and price proposals by the required date.
* Award was made to SSC Corporation at a total price of $4,427,340.00 on May 29, 2013.
* The Government notified the unsuccessful offerors on May 30, 2013 that award was made to SSC Corporation at a total price of $4,427,340.
* Within two (2) days of notification that they were not selected for award, GSC requested in writing that the Government provide an oral debriefing.
* The Government agreed to GSC's request for an oral debriefing and requested the Proposal Manager, Section Vice President, and GSC’s Contracts Lead for the proposal attend the debrief on June 15, 2013, at CUBE headquarters, from 9:00 – 9:30am.

GSC arrived at the debriefing location on time with the following attendees:

* Proposal Manager, Mr. Abe Lincoln
* Vice President of Technology, Mr. William Jobs
* Contracts Manager, Mr. Noah Itall
* The sub-contractor technical lead, Ms. Suzy Great
* Gray Space Corporation Lead Counsel, Mr. Some Body

In attendance for the Government were:

* Contracting Officer, Ms. Jane Q. Public
* Contract Specialist, Mr. Jasper Jacks
* Source Selection Evaluation Board Chair, Ms. Adata King
* Subject Matter Expert on SharePoint Project, Mr. John Doe

**ROLE-PLAY EXERCISE:** GSC is being debriefed. GSC visited CUBE to present their company’s capabilities with SharePoint, including their proprietary code that increases the level of security, during the Government’s market research phase. GSC is confident that they answered all of the discussion questions in their final proposal revision and believes the Government may have erred in its evaluation process.

Request For Proposal Section L (Excerpt)

**To be considered timely, proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on February 15, 2013**. Responses not received by the time and date specified and in the manner specified will be eliminated from consideration. Technical and price proposals shall be separate volumes and consist of the following information:

**VOLUME I – TECHNICAL**

The Technical Volume shall be limited to 50 pages. (Note: The cover letters does not count towards the page limitation.) A front and back side of a page will count as two pages. Response contents that exceed the stated page limitation will be removed from the volume by the Contracting Officer, prior to turning the response over to the Government evaluation team, and will not be considered in the evaluation. The Offeror's Technical Volume should demonstrate the firm's capability to perform the requirements outlined in the RFP and contain the following three (3) sections.

1. TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH
2. PROPOSED STAFF
3. PAST PERFORMANCE

**SECTION I - TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH**

The RFP sets out only the MINIMUM requirements that must be met by any successful contractor. The Government is seeking responses that go beyond a mere repetition of the minimum requirements by offering innovative, effective, and efficient management strategies and solutions that will ultimately result in the highest quality services which are clearly visible to the stakeholders.

The offeror shall provide a description of its technical approach, detailed and complete enough to clearly and fully demonstrate an understanding of the tasks and requirements specified in the Statement of Work (SOW). Phrases such as “standard procedures will be employed” and “well known techniques will be used” are not considered to be an adequate description. Although it is recognized that all of the technical criteria cannot be detailed in advance, the techniques, processes, and procedures the offeror plans to follow, in conjunction with the task areas to be performed, must be described in as much detail as the offeror considers necessary to fully explain the proposed technical approach or method.

The offeror shall, at a minimum, include the following elements when detailing its technical and management approach[[1]](#footnote-1):

1. Project Management Plan: The offeror shall address personnel, quality control, schedule, problem mitigation and resolution, cost control, and risk management for the project, including any sub-contractors that will be part of the offeror’s team. The offeror shall also address how they plan to manage teams located at both Government and non-government facilities. In addition, the offeror shall address how they plan to implement and safeguard Government Furnished Property (e.g., laptops, desktops, etc.) and Government Furnished Information, specifically at non-government sites.
2. Organizational Matrix: The offeror shall define and/or illustrate the lines of communication and authority between the offeror’s team and the Government team.
3. Recruitment and Retention Plan: The offeror shall describe how they will secure qualified candidates and efficiently process new personnel through the TREASURY security process and how they mitigate personnel turnover.

**SECTION II – PROPOSED STAFF**

The offeror shall designate the Program Manager, Technical Team Lead, Implementation Team Lead, and Security Team Lead for the project as Key Personnel. The offeror shall provide a description of the key personnel proposed, to include their relevant experience, education and qualifications in the form of resumes. Key personnel resume(s) shall be no longer than 2 pages each.

If proposed key personnel are not currently in the employment of the offeror, a written agreement from the potential employee to work must be submitted with their resume and must be signed by the employee and the offeror’s management. Key personnel resumes will not count towards the 50 page limit of the Technical Volume.

It is expected that all key personnel will serve for the duration of the task(s), or until an equivalent replacement(s) is nominated by the Contractor and accepted by CUBE. The CUBE COR and CO will approve all key personnel and will reject any nominated personnel not meeting the expected qualifications. CO approval is required prior to any change in key personnel.

**SECTION III - PAST PERFORMANCE**

The offeror must demonstrate their capabilities and experience on similar projects that have been completed by its firm. The offeror shall identify three (3) contracts it has recently performed (within the last 3 years from the date of this RFP), or is currently performing, that are similar in scope, magnitude and complexity of this contract. The Government will consider the relevance and quality of the offeror’s performance by evaluating its past performance. The offeror shall complete and submit the Past Projects Form (see Attachment D) for each project identified. In addition, for each of the projects submitted, the offeror shall ensure that a Past Performance Questionnaire (Attachment E) is sent to the cited Client POC(s) to provide feedback. The completed survey must be returned directly to CUBE by the Client This information will not count towards the 50 page limit in the Technical Volume.

The offeror is responsible for ensuring timely submission. **Past Performance Questionnaires are due no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on February 15, 2013. Surveys shall be submitted electronically to the following address: Jane.Q.Public@Treasury.gov or via fax (202-000-0000). Late submissions of the Contractor Past Performance Questionnaire will not be accepted.**

The past projects form will be used to determine relevance and the completed questionnaires will be used to collect and validate past performance information. The Government reserves the right to obtain information from sources other than those identified by the Contractor. References other than those identified in the proposal may be contacted by CUBE and the information received will be used in the evaluation of past performance.

**VOLUME II – PRICE**

Offerors shall provide two (2) copies (one (1) hard copy and one (1) electronic copy (CD), readable by MS Excel 12.0/MS Word 12.0, as applicable. The price volume has no page limitation. The offeror shall provide the unit price and total price for each line item. The unit prices multiplied by the quantities shown in Section B must equal the total price. Inconsistencies in multiplication or addition to the total value of the proposal shall be construed as weaknesses within the proposal.

Request For Proposal Section M (Excerpt)

The Offeror's Technical Volume should demonstrate the firm's capability to perform the requirements outlined in the RFP. The following three (3) factors, listed in descending order of importance will be used to evaluate proposals:

1. TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

2. PROPOSED STAFF

3. PAST PERFORMANCE

The above non-price factors, when combined, are considered to be significantly more important than price.

**FACTOR 1 - TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT APPROACH**

The Government will evaluate the offeror’s technical and management approach to determine the extent to which the offeror’s solution demonstrates an understanding of the requirements, and sound, practical, and feasible methods to accomplish all tasks, and proposes acceptable methods for ensuring the quality of deliverables. The offeror’s technical and management approach will be evaluated based on how well it meets the RFP requirements and the instructions in Section L.

The Government will also evaluate the following required information:

* Project Management Plan
* Organizational Matrix
* Recruitment and Retention Plan

**FACTOR 2 – PROPOSED STAFF**

This project requires resources who are familiar with SharePoint and who have worked with the Government to prepare the software for deployment across an agency. In addition to the required attributes of each resource, describe all relevant and recent experience. In determining the rating for this factor, the Government will give greater consideration to the staff with the most experience and expertise with SharePoint and deployments of such.

The following individuals are considered key personnel for this effort:

* Program Manager: 10+ years of project management experience, a PMP certification, and at least a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering or Technology
* Technical Team Lead: 7+ years of implementation experience, and at least a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering or Technology
* Implementation Team Lead: 5+ years of implementation experience, and at least a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering or Technology
* Security Team Lead: 5+ years of implementation experience, and at least a Bachelor’s degree in Engineering or Security

**FACTOR 3 - PAST PERFORMANCE**

The Government will evaluate the offeror's experience performing projects of a similar scope, magnitude and complexity of current and previous contracts during the last three (3) calendar years from the date of this RFP. This assessment will be used as a means of evaluating the relative capability of the offeror to successfully meet the requirements of the SOW. In determining the rating for this factor, the Government will give greater consideration to the contracts which are most relevant to the SOW. Relevancy is defined as similar in size, scope, and complexity to the requirements of this SOW. In performing this evaluation, the Government will consider the Past Projects Form (see Attachment D) and the past performance information provided by the Client POC(s) on the Contractor Performance Evaluation Survey (Attachment E). Additionally, the Government reserves the right to obtain information for use in the evaluation of past performance from any and all sources including sources outside of the Government.

Price

The Government is requesting Firm Fixed Price (FFP) proposals covering one base year and two option years. The schedule is as follows:

* Base Year: August 1, 2013 – July 31, 2014
* Option Year One: August 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015
* Option Year Two: August 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016

Price will be evaluated for reasonableness; however, price realism may be utilized for the limited purpose of measuring an offeror’s understanding of the solicitation requirements and for assessing the risk inherent in an offeror’s price.

Basis for Award

This is a best value procurement using trade-offs between technical and price factors. The Government will make an award to the responsible offeror whose proposal represents the best value to the Government, price and other factors considered. The three (3) non-price factors are Technical and Management Approach, Proposed Staff, and Past Performance. They are listed in descending order of importance and, when combined, are significantly more important than price.

As the technical evaluation of proposals approach equality, price becomes more important in making the award decision. In the event that two or more proposals are determined not to have any substantial technical differences (i.e. are technically equivalent), award may be made to the lower priced offeror. It should be noted that the award may be made to other than the lowest priced offeror if the Government determines that a price premium is warranted due to technical merit. The Government may also award to other than the highest technically rated offeror, if the Government determines that a price premium is not warranted.

Evaluation Rating Scheme

Technical factors will be evaluated using the rating scale outlined below:

| **Rating** | **Symbol** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Superior** | **S** | Proposal demonstrates an understanding of requirements and the approach significantly exceeds performance or capability standards. Has numerous strengths that will significantly benefit the Government, and no weaknesses. |
| **Good** | **G** | Proposal demonstrates an understanding of requirements and the approach exceeds performance or capability standards. Has one or more strengths that will benefit the Government, and no significant weaknesses. |
| **Satisfactory** | **SA** | Proposal demonstrates an understanding of requirements and the approach meets performance or capability standards. Has few or no strengths, with some weaknesses but no deficiencies. |
| **Unsatisfactory** | **U** | Fails to demonstrate an understanding of the requirement; one or more deficiencies exist for which correction would require a major revision or redirection of the proposal. |

Adjectival ratings defined below will be used to evaluate Past Performance:

| **Rating** | **Symbol** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Neutral** | **N** | No relevant performance record is identifiable upon which to base a meaningful performance rating. A search was unable to identify any relevant past performance information for the offeror or key team members/subcontractors or their key personnel. This is neither a negative or positive assessment. |
| **Superior** | **S** | Based on the offeror’s past performance record, essentially no risk exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. The past performance is very relevant to this requirement. |
| **Satisfactory** | **SA** | Based on the offeror’s past performance record, some risk exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. The past performance is relevant to this requirement. |
| **Unsatisfactory** | **U** | Based on an offeror’s past performance record, extreme doubt exists that the offeror will successfully perform the required effort. |

The Government will define strengths and weaknesses in its evaluation of proposals as follows:

**Strength:** any aspect of a proposal that, when judged against a stated evaluation criterion enhances the merit of the proposal or provides the increased probability of successful performance of the contract.

**Weakness:** a flaw in a proposal that increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance. A weakness need not be corrected for a proposal to be considered for award but may affect the proposal rating.

**Deficiency:** a material failure of a proposal to meet a Government requirement or a combination of significant weaknesses in a proposal that increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance to an unacceptable level.

Gray space corporation discussion questions

The following questions were submitted to GSC after the establishment of the competitive range:

1. Please address SOW task 2.1.4: Support the implementation and post implementation of SharePoint updates, including coordination with the data center, security, accessibility, and other CUBE directorates with operational/compliance responsibilities for CUBE applications and infrastructure. The contractor shall prepare documentation needed for understanding and support of the application, accessibility, and data center operations.
2. The role of the Program Manager (PM) in the project management plan is unclear. Please clarify the role of the PM and how the PM will maintain oversight of the project management plan.
3. Do the hours reflected in the proposal include a learning curve for employees new to the program? If not, explain how you will manage transition risk.

Additional Information

GSC’s legal counsel has provided the following memo to their CEO. The CEO has asked you to keep this in mind during the debrief.

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**TO**: GSC CEO

**FROM**: GSC Legal Counsel

**RE**: Government may have erred in its evaluation of our proposal

In general, the government must award to the lowest priced offeror if the technical evaluation is roughly the same. In order to award to a higher priced offeror, the government must do a trade off analysis that proves that the higher price is more advantageous to the government. See **B-292836,B-292836.2,B-292836.3,B-292836.4, Dec 18, 2003.** In order to be successful, GAO states that the government must articulate the specific items in the proposal that equate to the higher value and make a reasonable determination of how these items will benefit the agency. Absent this analysis, if our proposal was the lowest evaluated price, we should have been selected for award.

Please encourage the government to disclose their trade off process and explain exactly why our lower priced proposal was not selected. You are looking to see what analysis they used to assign value to our technical solution. Also note whether the technical person articulates the opinion. If it is not clear or the technical person does not provide the explanation, it may indicate that the government did not have an expert perform the analysis and the award may be improper. Finally, please request as much information on the trade off analysis done on the successful proposal. We need to know how they assigned the value and whether there was a reasonable basis for it. The less information the government is willing to provide, the more likely it is that the analysis was faulty.

PROPOSAL EXCERPTS

**Proposal Excerpt** - **Page 6, paragraphs 4-6:** While SharePoint is a robust platform and provides a plethora of functionality, it does not provide all the functionality that CUBE may need in support of its users and to address the level of security required. We understand that there is a difference between CUBE capabilities customization and SharePoint custom application development with the latter requiring custom code modules being deployed to the SharePoint farm through Farm solutions or User (Sandbox) solutions. While custom code solutions require a level of expertise to properly develop, we also understand that the process for configuring, deploying, upgrading and maintaining these custom developed solutions is equally important.

Custom SharePoint solutions, when properly developed and deployed, provide an additional layer of functionality and security to the end-users or administrators. The development and deployment of custom SharePoint solutions enhances the CUBE functionality of a SharePoint implementation in many ways. Specifically, custom SharePoint solutions provide a way to streamline operations, enhance user experience and provide decision-making tools within an organization through the use of custom workflows to drive internal business processes, data aggregation to deliver dynamic content updates to end-users and robust security capabilities. GSC will apply its proprietary code to the CUBE SharePoint implementation to increase the level of security – both internally and externally. While this code is owned by GSC, we feel the inconvenience to CUBE is minor when compared to the benefits of thwarting external penetration from unwanted “visitors and internal security threats from employees.

**Proposal Excerpt Page 7, Paragraph 1** – GSC will support implementation and post implementation of SharePoint updates, coordinate with the data center, security, accessibility, and other CUBE directorates. Documentation to support application, accessibility, and data center operations will be prepared in accordance with CUBE directorate requirements.

**Proposal Excerpt - Page 8, paragraph 4; Page 10, paragraph 2:** GSC will develop detailed design documentation outlining all aspects of CUBE, including the internal system interfaces, software configuration settings, data models, development standards, and user interface design. We will ensure that we engage with Components across TREASURY. This information will provide TREASURY with clear, concise communication to ensure information is addressed as “one TREASURY.”

**Proposal Excerpt - Page 12, paragraphs 2:** Our Implementation Lead will develop an all-encompassing implementation plan that addresses the needs of each CUBE directorate. Additional staff, including subject matter experts, will be included, as required, to ensure that as substantive issues arise they are immediately addressed. We will conduct monthly meetings with the government leads to review progress.

**Proposal Excerpt – Resumes section:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| HW/SW Technical Team Lead | Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science, Engineering or related field | 8 years of project and HW/SW implementation experience | Applies expertise and experience with CrossPoint and assists engineers in formulating preliminary designs, performing tests, and performing system analyses or simulations. Applies standard practices and techniques in specific CrossPoint engineering assignments. Assists in preparation of data and documentation. |

**Proposal Excerpt** - **Staffing Section, page 16, paragraph 1:** Our staffing approach maximizes the use of each full time employee to cross level and cross train staff allowing for effective matrixing of skills to produce a more flexible organization with minimal stove pipes. Our experienced, proven workforce is ready to go on Day One. We propose Mr. Adam West, the current task lead for the USMC SharePoint project, and Ms. Roberta Snow, the current security team lead for the USMC SharePoint project, to lead the team and security services team respectively. Due to their experience on the USMC SharePoint project, they are ready to begin upon contract award.

1. *Note that these are not sub-factors.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)