Red Team Consulting

Society of SAME American Military Engineers

Developing Effective Capture and Proposal Strategies

Presented by Red Team Consulting

September 14, 2017

Red Team Consulting

Red Team's major areas of support include:

- Proposal management
- Capture management and planning
- Proposal writing
- Price strategy and price to win
- Editing, desktop publishing, graphics
- Training and seminars
- Business management consulting

Industries we support:

- Information Systems
- Communications Technology
- Physical Protection Services
- Marketing and Communications
- Construction
- Logistics
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing

About Red Team Consulting . . .

Red Team Consulting is a woman-owned small business headquartered in Reston, VA providing a wide range of consulting services in support of federal contracting activities. Our mission is simple – we strive to help our clients grow. Red Team and Red Team personnel have supported over a thousand federal procurements across nearly every agency in the federal government and we have a current portfolio of over 500 clients ranging from small businesses to large systems integrators and consulting firms. Our clients are throughout the US and overseas in countries such as England, UAE, and Kuwait. Red Team has supported the capture of over $100 billion worth of federal contracts since the company was founded in March of 2004.

Speakers

Jeffrey Shen

- VP and GM of Red Team
- Over 20 years of federal contracting and program management experience
- Involved in the award of over $30B of contracts
- Delivered business strategy, technology solutions to the Federal Government and Fortune 500 companies worldwide
- Former V.P of Sales and Marketing for a $300 million integrator.
- Mentored/trained many successful sales executives, project managers, and technical staff
- Active leadership role in industry organizations
- Frequent speaker on federal contracting, business development, and government ethics

AGENDA

- Understanding the Evaluation Process
- Researching and Influence the Opportunity
- Making Effective Go/No-Go Decisions
- Developing a Sound Strategy
- Proposal Development Strategies
- Effective Tools and Writing Techniques
- Have Meaningful Reviews

Understanding the Evaluation Process

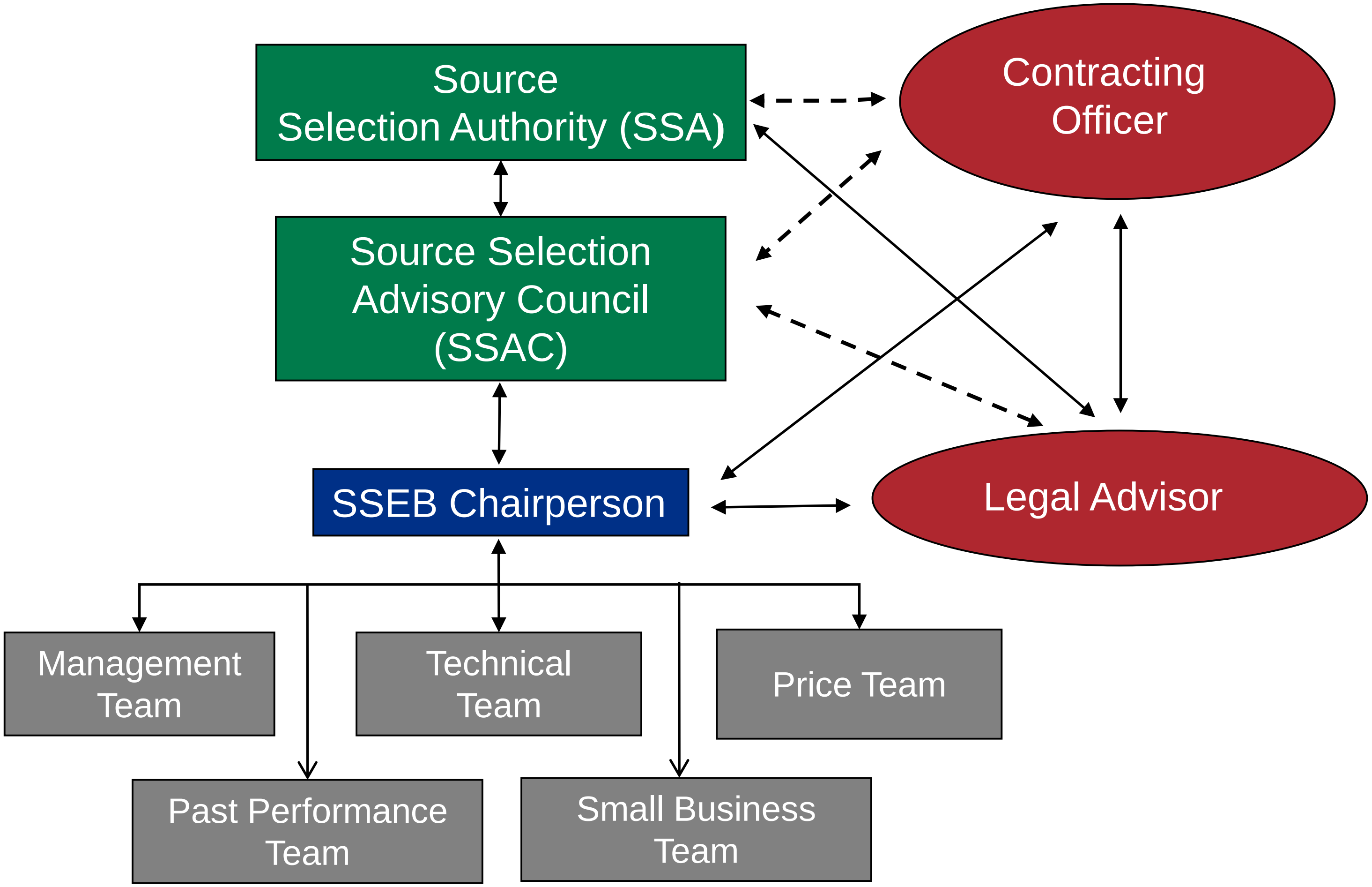
THE TRUTH ABOUT EVALUATIONS

- People Buy From People Who
  - They Know
  - They Like
  - They Trust

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR CAPTURE?

- What do you know about the evaluator?
  - Technical requirements, internal environment, challenges, objectives and goals, decision makers and their preferences, their contracting history preferences, certification expectations, small business goals, key personnel interests, etc.
- What does the evaluator know about you?
  - Key personnel, past performance, capabilities and experience, innovative solutions, financial capability, commitment to their mission, ideas to support their programs, etc.
- How will the evaluator make their decision?
  - Technical, management, past performance, price, key personnel and staffing, quality management, risk management, technical prototype, orals demonstration, etc.

COMMON EVALUATION TEAM STRUCTURE



PROPOSAL EVALUATION VS. SOURCE SELECTION

- Proposal Evaluation - FAR Part 15.305
  - Examination of the merits of each proposal against the requirements of the solicitation and evaluation criteria and rating the factors and sub-factors accordingly.
  - The relative strengths, deficiencies, significant weaknesses, and risks supporting proposal evaluation shall be documented in the contract file.
  - Performed by the Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB)
    - *Note: A comparison of one offeror's proposal to another **DOES NOT** take place during evaluation phase.*

- Source Selection
  - Comparing the evaluated merits of each proposal against those of other proposals using the established weights of the factors and sub-factors, and selecting the proposal judged to represent the "Best Value" to the Government
  - Performed by the Source Selection Authority (SSA)
    - *Note: The identity of the offerors is unknown to the SSA, so a competitor's good "reputation" – even if well deserved - is meaningless outside of the stated evaluation criteria.*

BEST VALUE EVALUATIONS

- FAR 15.101 – Best Value Continuum
  - Best Value evaluations can be ambiguous - important to understand agency or contracting office tendencies
  - Some agencies publish internal guidelines regarding best value determination
  - In acquisitions where the requirement is less defined, there is more development work, or there is greater performance risk, technical or past performance considerations may play a dominant role in source selection and best value determination

BEST VALUE EVALUATIONS

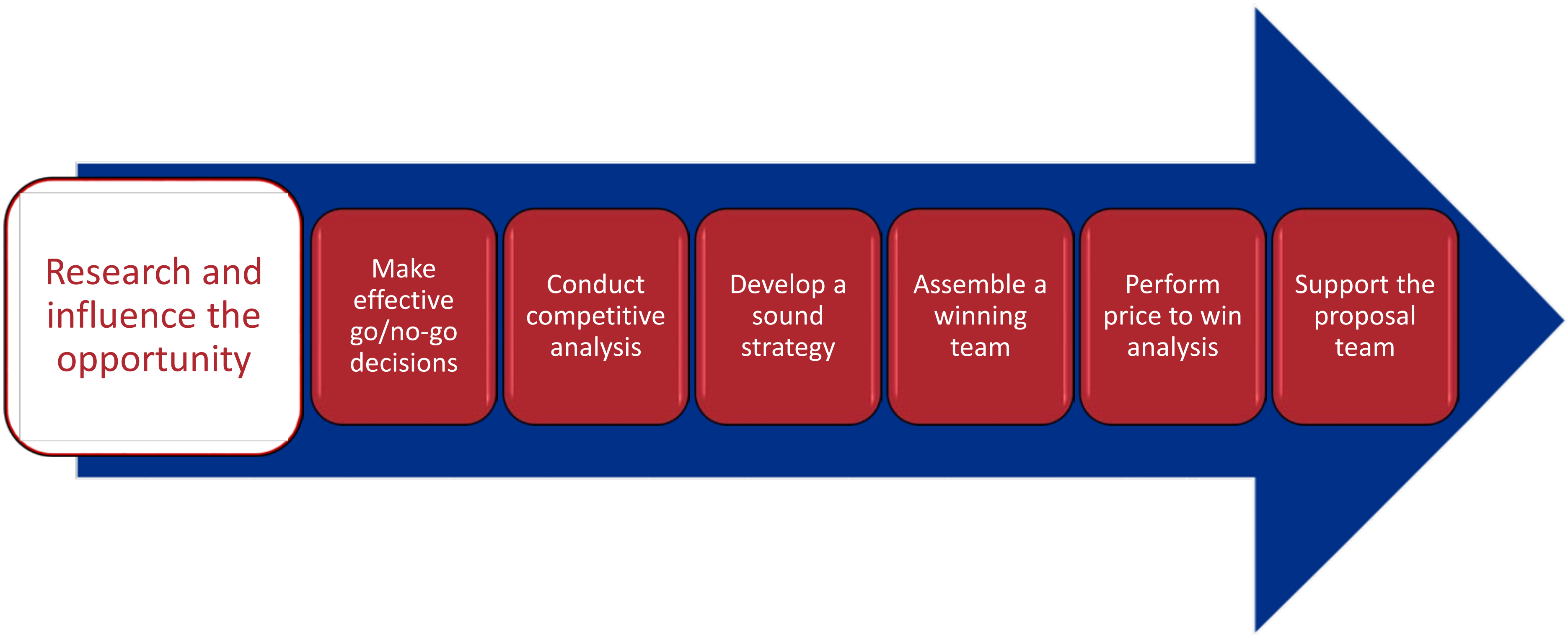
Tradeoff Process (FAR 15.101-1)

- A tradeoff process may be used when it is in the best interest of the Government to award to other than the lowest priced offer, or other than the highest technically rated offer.
    - Non-Price Factors are weighted relative to price.
    - All evaluation factors and significant subfactors and their relative importance shall be clearly stated in the solicitation
    - “The solicitation shall state whether all evaluation factors other than cost or price, when combined, are significantly more important than, approximately equal to, or significantly less important than cost or price.”
    - The perceived benefits of the higher priced proposal shall merit the additional cost, and the rationale for tradeoffs must be documented in the file in accordance with 15.406.
    - Frequently see around a 5-10% price threshold in best value evaluations

EVALUATION RATING SYSTEMS

Color	Rating	Debriefing Definition #1	Debriefing Definition #2
	Outstanding	Exceeds requirements with exceptional performance. Little to no doubt that offeror will perform. Very low risk.	Many significant strengths and advantages not offset by any deficiencies or weaknesses.
	Good	Exceeded some requirements with superior features. Little doubt that offeror will perform with low risk.	Several strengths not offset by any deficiencies or significant weaknesses. May have a few minor weaknesses.
	Acceptable	Capable of meeting requirements with average or slightly above average quality. Some doubt exists with low to moderate risk.	Some strengths not offset by any deficiencies or significant weaknesses. Likely to have a few weaknesses.
	Marginal	Proposal Marginally meets requirements. Difficult to ascertain overall quality. Significant doubt exists with moderate to high risk.	Has deficiencies or significant weaknesses due to errors or omissions. Is capable of improvement.
	Unacceptable	Proposal is inadequate and offeror cannot meet requirements. Extremely doubtful with very high risk in offeror performing.	Has many deficiencies due to major errors and omissions. Is not capable of improvement.

RESEARCH AND INFLUENCE THE OPPORTUNITY



Identifying the customer's challenges and goals are critical to capture

- List the top challenges as a starting point. The more specific the more effective they are.
  - Used as a basis for developing a win strategy and win themes later in the capture
  - Ensures that all contributors are on the same page with the customer's key objectives

RESEARCH THE OPPORTUNITY…

When identifying a customer's challenges and goals, minimally determine . . .

- What is their current infrastructure and technology environment?
- What are their preferences in terms of technologies or processes?
- Are they budget constrained or has their funding increased?
- Have you noticed turnover or do they appear short-staffed?
- Do they have too many overlapping systems?
- What is the anticipated evaluation criteria?
- If this is a re-compete contract, what are the key drivers and requirements of the re-compete?
- Who are our anticipated competitors from a contract vehicle perspective?
- Who are the influential people or decision makers?
- What is the overall intended procurement timeline?

....THEN INFLUENCE THE OPPORTUNITY

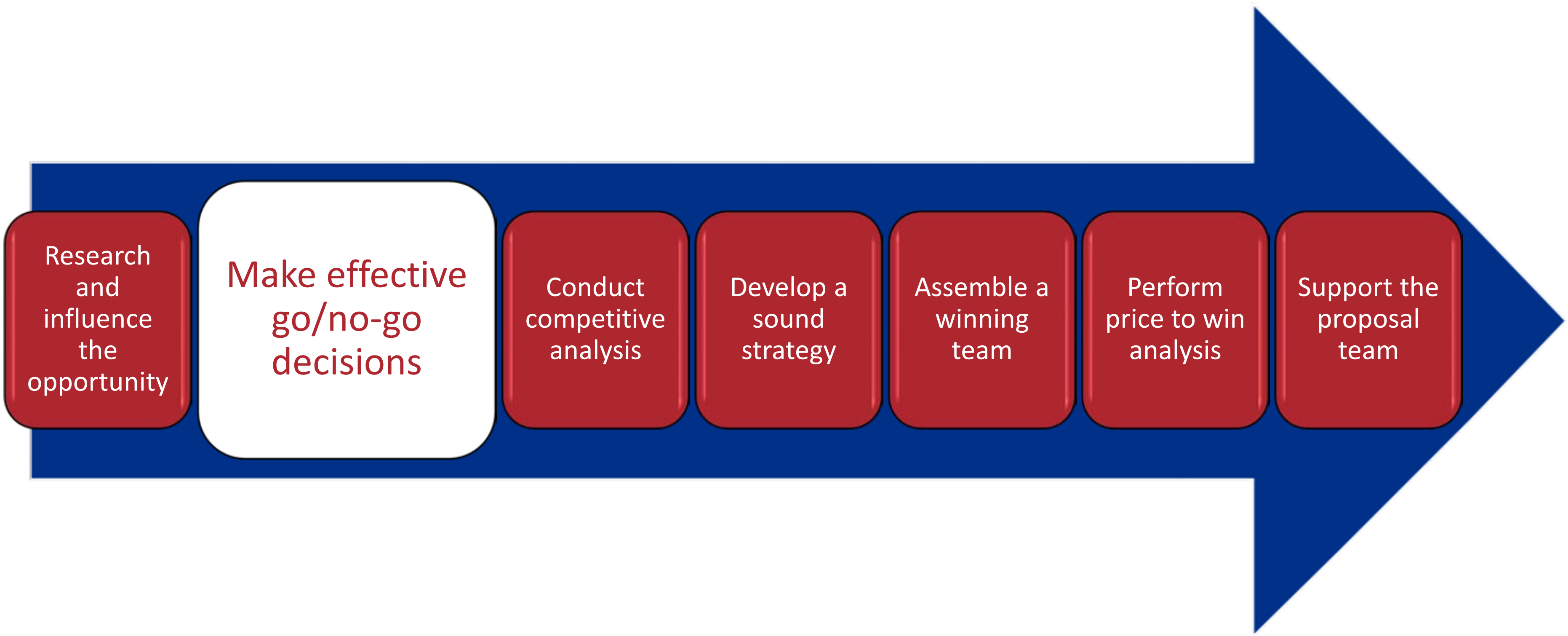
Call Planning – The process by which you market, influence, or communicate your value while gathering important information that will support your win strategy.

  - Identify decision makers, influencers, and those who provide input
  - Identify the issues or hot buttons for those individuals

- The approach you take should elicit feedback and interaction that supports your bid.
  - Present and validate your solution
  - Confirm the actual decision makers
  - Recommend acquisition approaches (instructions and evaluation criteria)
  - Confirm key requirements
  - Identify requirement gaps
  - Gather competitive intelligence
  - Build relationship with the customer

Call Planning should take place prior to any official government market research.

MAKE EFFECTIVE GO/NO-GO DECISIONS



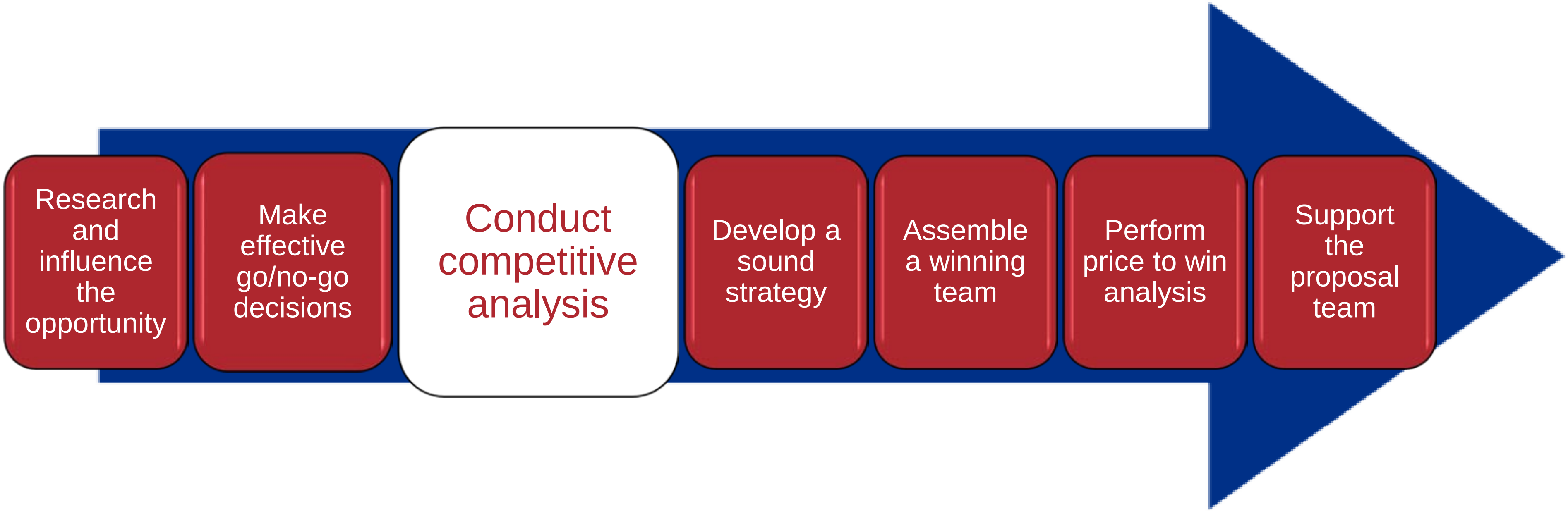
QUALIFYING OPPORTUNITIES

- Qualifying an opportunity involves researching and analyzing an opportunity solely on the merits of the opportunity. This should not be confused with analyzing your ability to win.
- Qualifying an opportunity involves determining its <u>validity, viability, and value.</u>
- There are two stages during which an opportunity should be qualified:
    1. Immediately upon identification of the opportunity
    2. Immediately upon RFP release (or DRFP release, if possible)
- Determine the cost to win the opportunity in relation to the opportunity's anticipated value to your company.
- At these same stages, you should also separately analyze your ability to win.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Do a gut check bid analysis.
  - Can we unequivocally meet the RFP’s requirements?
  - Does it fit within our strategic plan?
  - Do we know details outside of what is publicly posted? (environment, key decision makers, internal politics, preferences, what’s really important to them, etc)
  - Do we have the secret sauce (incumbent teaming partner, key personnel, key solution)
  - Do the customers know us and like us?
- Make decisions early. Don’t wait until the agency is already preparing requirements for the contract competition.
- There must be an opportunity champion who is honest with their company’s chances in relation to the opportunity. This might not be the individual in charge of the account.

CONDUCT COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS



WHAT ARE THE OUTPUTS OF A COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

A Competitive Analysis Should Achieve One or More of These Outputs:

- Influence the government on their perception of your strengths or that of a competitors
- Influence the government to alter the solicitation's requirements (or evaluation criteria) to either favor you or discredit the competitor.
- Impact how you conduct your overall capture.
- Impact the proposal that you will develop.

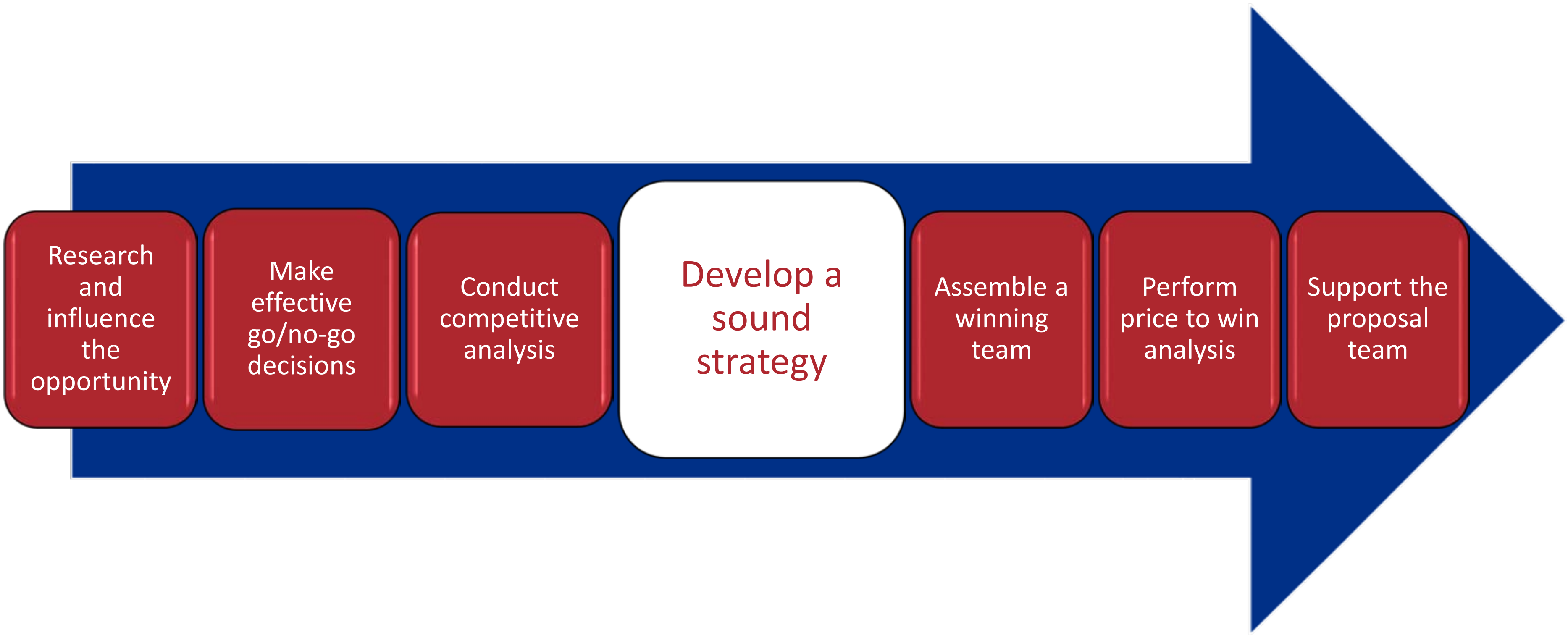
HOW TO CONDUCT A COMPETITVE ANALYSIS

1. Identify the competition → 2. Determine the criteria → 3. Research sources of data → 4. Collect data against SWOT

After collecting all of the data:

- Develop a high level summary of all competitors strengths, weaknesses, and discriminators against the evaluation criteria
- Determine the competitor’s bid strategy
- Develop a counter-strategy of how to compete against them
- Develop recommendations of how to improve your overall ability to compete

DEVELOP A SOUND STRATEGY



WIN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

- Approach, capabilities, experience that defines how you will win.
- Meant to encompass all elements of capture that summarizes how your solution and approach meet the customer’s objectives, challenges, and evaluation criteria.
- Involves your ability to meet or exceed all of the stated requirements
- Win theme and solution development can occur simultaneously
- Must-have knowledge includes:
  - Customer’s needs, challenges, requirements, and evaluation criteria
  - Understanding of solution and/or approach
  - Documentation of gaps that exist in approach

SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT

- The process of creating the actual contracting solution, offering, or select vehicle of choice for customers.
  - Developed and detailed when an opportunity is identified
  - Based upon the customer's needs and requirements
  - Takes into account future-state requirements as well as current requirements
  - Provides timeline of overall solution with milestones and actions
  - Documents the themes, benefits, and value-add of overall solution for customer.

Ensure They are Meaningful to the Decision Maker

Ensure the win themes align to the decision maker's needs and requirements

- A win theme should be written in such a way that an evaluator can give you a "strength" for it
- You need to know your solution before you can develop a win theme
- Ensure the win themes clearly articulate a:
  - High-level feature of your solution
  - Benefit to the customer
  - Discriminator
  - Proof statement
- A win theme is not:
  - "Our services offer the best value to the agency."
  - "We offer the lowest risk solution to the customer."

When developing your win themes – think like the customer.

WIN THEMES

Ensure They are Meaningful to the Evaluator

GOVERNMENT EXAMPLE

Poor Win Theme: Team ABC provides the government with a unique and successful recruiting methodology.

Feature	Benefit	Discriminator	Proof
Contract specific recruiters used that have a performance based comp plan	Quicker fill rate for open positions, shortened start-up time, less risk at transition, saves government $	Our assigned contract specific recruiters have never missed a staffing deadline in 10+ years.	On previous contract we achieved a 100% fill rate within required timeframes. 100% of incentive fee received

Compelling Win Theme: Team ABC's innovative recruiting methodology provides for contract-dedicated recruiters that report to the Team ABC PM. Their contract-level knowledge results in a quicker and higher fill-rate for positions, ultimately saving the government time and money. This methodology was successfully used on Contract XXX where our shorter transition time and 100% fill rate resulted in a cost savings of $2 million for Agency YYY

Proposal Development Strategies

What is a Responsive Proposal?

- The goal is to give them what they want, in the order they want it.
  - Assesses the customer's goals and mitigates risk
  - Addresses the customer's requirements
  - Reflects that your core competencies meet the requirements, and addresses "hot button" issues
  - Effectively communicates to the customer that you understand & have proposed a solution that addresses and fulfills their requirement(s)
    - Myth: What the Government wants is more important than the stated evaluation criteria

What is a Winning Proposal?

- A winning proposal will be easy to evaluate. Write the proposal to map to the instructions and address the evaluation criteria.
- If there is anything special or unique about your proposal that you the want the government evaluators to know, write it out first.
- Tell the Government what your approach is, tell them how it will be done, and what the benefits and discriminators are.
- Anticipate the competitor win themes
- Demonstrate your approach and solution as the lowest risk provider to meet their requirements. This is done through incorporating relevant experience and past performance examples throughout your proposal.

First Steps and Tools

The First and Most Important Step

- Before doing anything, read the solicitation cover to cover
  - Don't assume that the only important parts are covered in Sections C, L, and M
  - Identify *all* requirements; contractual, proposal, and other
    - This is the beginning of your compliance checklist and outline
  - Identify areas that are unclear, incomplete or perceived impossible
  - Develop initial list of questions
- Schedule the kick-off meeting. Confirm the attendance and timing with your executive team.
- Send the COMPLETE RFP to the team with the expectation that it be read thoroughly prior to the kick-off meeting
- Thoroughly review the SOW/PWS/SOO, instructions, and the evaluation factors and they way they are worded.

Create Your Tools

- The fewer tools, the better
- Four primary areas that need to be managed/tracked
  - Proposal Compliance – Ensure you have a chance to win
  - Proposal Schedule – Give your team time to develop the proposal
  - Proposal Responsibilities – Ensure every required part of the proposal is clearly assigned
  - Proposal Progress – Proposal require collaboration and improve in iterations. Make sure you are tracking the process at a very granular level.
- These four areas can be most effectively managed through the use of only ***three*** tools
  - **Annotated Outline – provides the details of the RFP for compliance**
  - Proposal Schedule/Calendar – keeps the team aware of all milestones, review dates
  - Proposal Compliance Matrix – use one spreadsheet that has multiple purposes (compliance matrix, responsibility matrix, progress tracker)
- All information in one place means you can spend more time managing the proposal, not updating different tools

The Outline – Making the Process Manageable

- Developing a proposal is like managing any other project – it's best managed in smaller pieces.
- An annotated outline is a hierarchically organized that contains notes stating the instructions, evaluation factors, other pertinent solicitation text, and guidance.
- The purpose of your proposal is to answer requirements in the order expected, *NOT* necessarily to tell a story

1 Attachment 7 Reference List (Evaluation A.2)

Proposal Instructions: To be considered for award, please address the following:
· Attachment 7 Reference List

Provision 4-3 Evaluation: 2. Past Performance
This criterion will be assessed on the degree of relevancy and success in performing past and current FSA administration contracts of a similar scope, size and complexity. Proposals will be evaluated on the degree of effectiveness, quality, and past success as well as any associated performance risks. To assist with assessing this factor, each offeror will be required to provide a list of six (6) client references; four (4) current and two (2) prior. The USPS will contact all companies on that list. Members of the evaluation team will assign an adjectival rating for this factor based on information provided by these client references. A lack of response from a client reference will be counted against the offeror.

The offeror must cite experience in administering at least one FSA plan of a large number of participants, some of whom are represented by a collective bargaining entity such as a labor union or employee organization. "Large" in the prior sentence is defined as 10,000+ participants. Moreover, all six (6) examples should include performance relative to client satisfaction expectation and cost containment or reduction efforts. The information provided should be at a level of detail that will fully allow USPS technical evaluators to assess the offeror's demonstrated performance. A summary paragraph describing the particulars of the relationship for each of these six (6) clients should be included. Offerors must provide this information using Attachment 7.

Attachment 7: To be considered for award, an offer must provide six (6) references; four (4), from current FSA clients and two (2) from former clients. The USPS will contact all organizations from the list you provide.

Guidance: Regarding the selection of past performance, I recommend we use the XXX. Use the templates they provided.

The Outline – Making the Process Manageable

Steps to Creating an Outline/Shell:

1. Set the style sheets and page layout to match the RFP's formatting requirements, if they exist. Use no less than 10pt TNR if they don't (12pt recommended).
2. Find the general instructions for the proposal organization and layout in Word.
3. Use numbered or lettered (whatever the RFP uses for organization) headings and subheadings in Word to recreate the given proposal organization.
   a. Insert ALL <u>instructions</u> that go with each section.
      a. For particularly long sets of instructions that go with a single section, consider breaking down the instructions into subheadings.
      b. Unless otherwise directed by the RFP, follow the instructions. If the instructions requires a point-by-point response to the SOW/PWS, follow the SOW/PWS order.
   c. Then incorporate additional elements from the evaluation criteria (usually called Section M). Sometimes the evaluation factors include items that are out of the instructions either as separate main headings or as subheadings where appropriate.
   d. Finally, incorporate additional requirements (like the SOW/PWS) from the rest of the RFP.
   e. Use exact wording from the RFP for the headings, they can be shortened later if necessary.

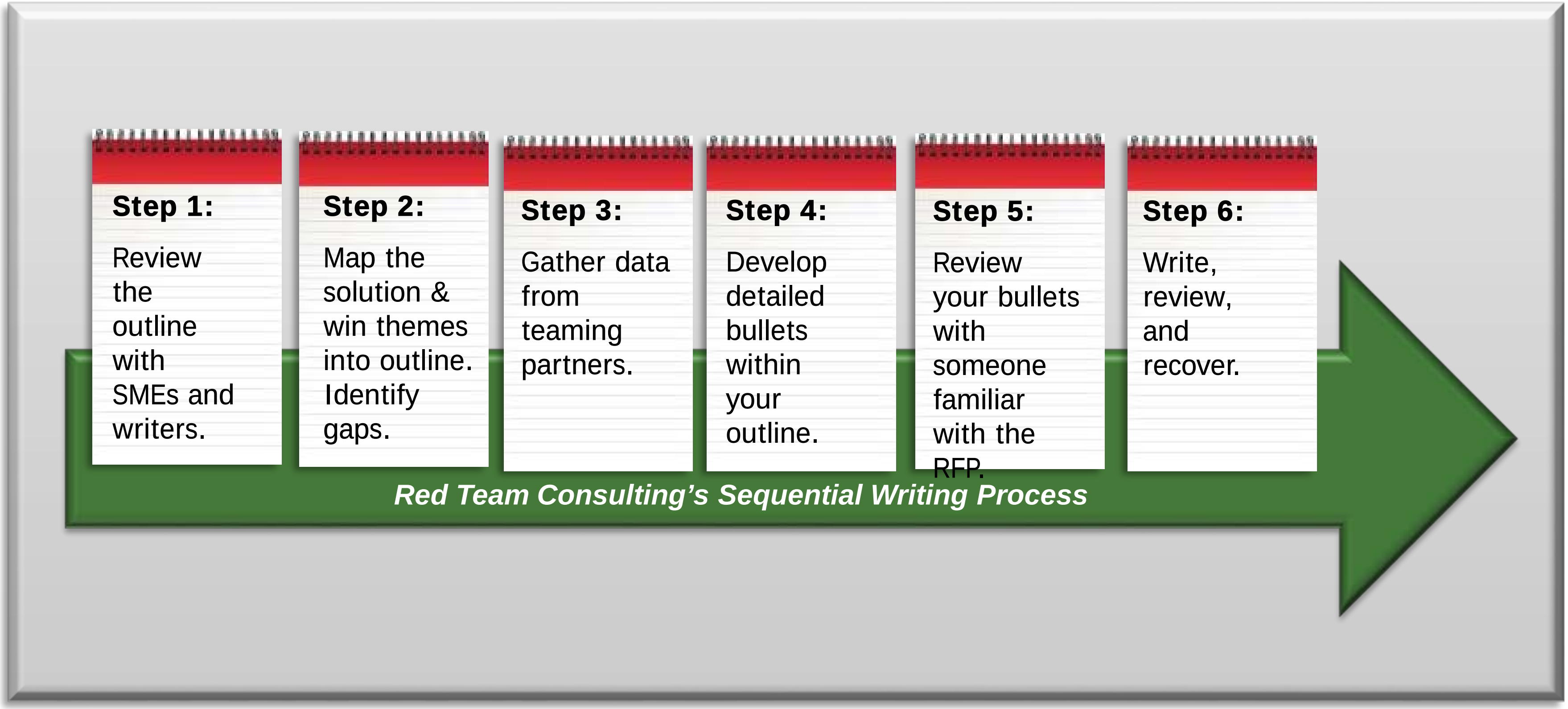
The Outline – Making the Process Manageable

Optional, but highly recommended:

- Insert the win themes that have been developed into the appropriate places in the outline.
- Create table “shells” where applicable.
- Determine page targets based on instructions and evaluation criteria.
- Provide as much guidance as you can to the writer.
- Leave an area for you to insert your bullets/narrative.
- Use a highlight tool to highlight the parts of the RFP you have accounted for in the outline to ensure.

Follow a Sequential Writing Process

Use a Sequential Writing Process



The key to successful proposal writing is to follow an organized, sequential process.

Developing Bullets in the Outline

- Begin all writing in the proposal with BULLETS
- The bullets should come from the solution that was developed by the SMEs
- The bullets should include information gathered from the teaming partners
- Include the “what”, “who”, “when” of the solution
- Bullets should provide statistics and applicable facts (or indicate where they are needed)
- Identify potential areas for graphics and ideas for graphics
- Have bullets for every heading and subheading
- Insert win themes and discriminators into the appropriate sections

Writing Techniques

In addition to following explicit instructions, the flow of writing should be consistent. For example:

1. **Convey Understanding**. Describe why the requirement is important to the customer. This is a good place to convey "hot buttons".
2. **Affirm compliance.** Many evaluators are looking for you to state that you will meet (or exceed) the requirement.
3. **Provide Your Approach/Plan.** Describe what the company will do or what the solution is.
4. **Provide Your Capabilities.** What capabilities does the company have in terms of resources, partners, tools, etc.
5. **Demonstrate Feasibility.** Substantiate the claims you have made with proof and examples of success.

We understand…. We will… Here's how… We can because… As proof…

Writing Techniques

Make sure your writers understand the following:

- Evaluators frequently work off of a check list when evaluating your proposal. This checklist is developed based on the instructions and the evaluation criteria in the RFP
- An evaluator will only be reviewing their assigned portion of the proposal
- For an evaluator to score your proposal above the level for “meets”, they will need to list specific reasons
- If an evaluator can’t find quickly your answer to an RFP requirement, they most likely won’t keep looking
- An evaluator does not have to “read” your proposal, they have to “evaluate” your proposal

Have Meaningful Reviews

Meaningful Reviews

- Too many people on a color review can be counterproductive
- Reviewers should be people who know your company well
- Break reviewers out into teams just like the Government would
- Assign a leader for each team for large proposals
  - Leads a group discussion that occurs between the review and the debrief
  - Consolidates comments from group, including the recommended solutions
  - Spokesperson for the group during the debrief
- Have each team start with a different volume (or section)

Meaningful Reviews

- Follow the compliance matrix for the RFP order
- Let the reviewer know how you want their feedback (electronic, track changes, comments, etc.)
- Prepare specific questions you need the reviewers to answer or help with
- <u>Constructive Criticism: Don't just point out a problem, provide a potential solution</u>
- The RFP is KING. Reviewers should not be biased by what they think the customer is looking for
- Review to ensure the proposal is:
  - Compliant (did we provide everything we're supposed to)
  - Correct (did we provide the right answer)
  - Compelling (did we convince the government we can do this better than others can)

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In Summary…

- Make sure opportunities align with your strategic plan and core competencies
- Take the time to research each opportunity to gauge your likelihood of win
- Answer the questions, “What do I know about the customer”, “What does the customer know about me”, “How will the customer evaluate”
- Document all customer challenges, goals, and evaluation criteria before pursuing any opportunity. These will act as the basis for your capture and proposal work.
- Get in front of the customer.
- Spend time developing your solution, win strategy and win themes – these should be directly inserted into your proposal.
- Create the outline and do not copy and paste any information (yet!)
- Spend time developing bullets before writing.

QUESTIONS & OPEN DISCUSSION

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