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Please respond to llewis@sw.rr.com

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To: David C. Childs A-76comments/OMB/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: A government employee's viewpoint

I want to respond to your A-76 process from the viewpoint of a "mere government employee" who has been intimately involved with the process. I work in Information Technology at an Air Force Base that completed an A-76 outsourcing of all base support services in October 2002. I was RIFed and demoted and had to work, until I could get my grade back, in the Program Management Office, overseeing the A-76 contractor. The contractor's bid beat the Most Effective Organization's (MEO) (the government employees) bid by \$30-\$40k per year for a five year contract. The contractor has had control here for 2 1/2 months and has requested another \$1+M per year x 5 years be added to the contract. This is in addition to a total of over \$700M for the five-year contract, and it causes the total cost of the contract to far exceed the MEO's bid.

When the A-76 process began, the work statement was written very generically as a Performance Requirements Document, not a Statement of Work. This document doesn't specify in detail every task that has to be performed but does say, for instance, that the contractor ... "will provide support on projects that involve IT systems installation or upgrades..." A Statement of Work gives very specific step-by-step detail about how a job is to be accomplished. When this contractor is asked to do anything the first thing they say is that "it wasn't specified in the contract, we don't have the manpower, or we didn't bid on that." However they did bid on the work of the Communications Squadron as well as the work of the other support squadrons. During the last four years our squadron went from about 90% manned to less than 45% manned but we were still able to take on every communications project or tasking that came to us. That is because it was our job and we were not in the job to make money for a corporation, we did the work for our country.

The government does not save anything by contracting out services as they did in this contract. A few of the people have the skills to do the work, but where the current federal workforce wins hands down is that we know the idiosyncrasies of the base, the people and the organizations. As an example here, we had a civilian gentleman who had worked here for 15 years and he knew where every communications closet and manhole on base was located and what each cable served. Because of the A-76, we lost his expertise because he was not able to retire and go to work for the contractor. Most of all, the current federal workforce knows the Air Force, especially in this case because many of the new employees have never been on an Air Force base before. Also I have seen first-hand that current employees may have the "right of first refusal" in hiring but they are also the first to be released because of the contractor's "employment at will" policy.

One of my additional duties was that of the Support Agreement Manager for the Communications Squadron. Our agreements are reviewed triennially and in our regulations tenant units on the base may go outside the base for services if they wish. I never saw any unit go outside the government to get communications services because of the exorbitant costs. Also there should not be any Support Agreements negotiated before 1997 that are still active.

There are a lot of private contractors in this area hired to do specific projects (military construction, cabling, etc) that the base does not have manpower to complete and I think that is the way it should be. However, I don't think that private contractors should come on a base and take over the workings of the core support services. There are a lot of reforms that should be made in government practices, but contracting out everything is not the answer.

Respectfully,

Janet Lewis

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