

C3 Partnering - Customer, Contracting, Commerce

The Customer, Contracting, and Commerce Partnering (C3) method of acquisition simplifies the acquisition process and has done much to dispel the customer's perception that the acquisition process is entirely too bureaucratic and cumbersome as compared to the traditional sealed bidding method!

In simple contracting terms, the C3 method is a modified two step bidding process. It works particularly well with minor repair, alteration, and maintenance services, but is not limited to contract type. The two steps of C3 are as follows.

STEP 1

The goal in step one is to conduct a site visit with as many interested contractors as possible and to have them submit technical proposals for evaluation and acceptance. The site visit can be initiated with a telephone call to contractors. The government is represented with a contracting officer, contract specialist, engineering support office (ESO), attorney (as necessary), inspectors and customer representative (s). As the most critical part of the C3 process, the site visit is where the government and industry agree on what is to be procured. Although it is the requiring activity's responsibility to tell the contractors what it wants (delivery, inspection and quality standards, need for drawings, etc.), the contractor is encouraged to disagree or provide recommendations that differ from those of the government. Brainstorming and sharing between the contractor and government are desired. The intent is to clarify any work issues before a contract is awarded.

The requiring activity, with guidance from the ESO, is responsible for evaluating the technical proposal. Proposals must address method of accomplishment, material to be used, inspection and quality control plans, and delivery schedules. Proposals will be evaluated as acceptable, reasonably susceptible of being made acceptable, and not acceptable. Discussions are authorized to assist a contractor with a proposal deemed reasonably susceptible of being made acceptable.

Step one concludes with the receipt, evaluation and acceptance of contractor technical proposals.

STEP 2

During step two, only contractors with acceptable proposals are issued an invitation for bid (IFB). Before the IFB can be issued, a funded purchase request is required, as well as other contract documents (e.g., independent government cost estimate, contracting officer representative nomination). The bid response time is usually reduced because the contractor normally has already priced his proposal as he prepared it. The contract award is made in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 14, Sealed Bidding.

In summary, with C3 partnering, the customer no longer worries about the preliminary steps and documentation required to begin the contracting process. The government conducts a site visit with interested vendors who then propose a technical approach (step one); vendors with technically acceptable proposals are invited to submit a bid (step two). The C3 process is an attempt to put customer, contractor, and contracting minds together to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason. It empowers its partners to do what is best for the government.