



## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL PALM BEACH COUNTY

### CONTRACT OVERSIGHT NOTIFICATION (2012-N-0009)

ISSUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2012

Sheryl G. Steckler  
Inspector General

*"Enhancing Public Trust in Government"*

### Children's Services Council Selection Committees

#### ISSUES

Office of Inspector General, Palm Beach County (OIG) staff attended multiple Children's Services Council (CSC) selection committee meetings (involving two Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and one Request for Proposal (RFP)) described below:

**RFQ # 12-001** - *Graphic Design Services Resource Pool* – The purpose of this solicitation was to develop a pool of Graphic Design Professionals who could be called upon to complete specific design and layout projects. The RFQ specified the following criteria on which the Selection Committee's recommendations were to be based:

- Proposer's previous experience and references - 20 Points
- Portfolio - 40 Points
- Availability to perform requested services - 20 Points
- Cost - 20 Points

Six (6) proposals were received and the Selection Committee, comprised of four (4) individuals, moved all six (6) to the next step in the review process, oral presentations. Based on the oral presentations, the Selection Committee scored the proposals and made contract recommendations to establish a pool of three (3) Graphic Designers. The first, second and fourth highest rated proposer received a recommendation for contract; the third highest rated proposer did not. Justification for why the fourth highest bidder was recommended, and not the third, was not evident or documented.

**RFQ # 12-002** - *Facilitation and Executive Coaching* – The purpose of this solicitation was to identify a facilitator who is adept at skill transference and executive coaching. The RFQ specified the following criteria on which the Selection Committee's recommendations were to be based:

- Proposer's previous experience with facilitation at system-level multiple stakeholders
- Proposer's previous experience with individual coaching and transference of skills
- Proposer's experience with working with CSC funded agencies
- Proposer's experience with CSC's system of care
- Cost

Two proposals were received and after initial discussion and review, the Selection Committee, comprised of four (4) individuals, decided to extend an interview to only one of the proposers. As a result of the interview, the Selection Committee made a contract recommendation for the sole interviewee. The decisions made by the Selection Committee were documented in notes prepared by the Selection Committee Chair.

This RFQ failed, however, to specify points for the individual evaluation factors. The use of weights or points assigned to evaluation factors and sub-factors provide selection committees and proposers with a clear understanding of the basis of award. This Selection Committee had no formal guidance as to how one criteria was to be rated, or valued, compared to other criteria. Moreover, proposers had no guidance from the CSC indicating which criteria it considered most valuable. Selection results are less beneficial to proposers if they fail to identify ratings for the individual criteria. In addition, proposers are left to wonder why they did not receive an award and/or how they compared to other proposers who did. Providing useful feedback to proposers helps to create a larger pool of qualified candidates, which should enhance the economic and equitable procurement of services in the future.

**RFP - Home Visitation Evaluation** – The purpose of this RFP was to identify an independent evaluator to conduct a multi-year evaluation of select Home Visitation programs in Palm Beach County. The RFP specified the following criteria on which the Selection Committee’s recommendations were to be based:

- Proposer’s previous experience and references – 20 Points
  - Proposer’s Skill
  - Work Sample
- Resource Capacity – 30 Points
  - Proposer’s Qualifications
  - Availability to Perform Requested Services
- Proposed Project Budget – 20 Points
- Proposed Approach – 30 Points
  - Proposal Summary
  - Statement of Work

Six (6) proposals were received and the Selection Committee, comprised of seven (7) individuals, reviewed and scored all six (6). The three highest rated proposals were recommended for the next step in the selection process, oral presentations. At subsequent meetings, the Selection Committee participated in the oral presentations, scored the proposals, and recommended a contract award for approval. The process whereby the Selection Committee developed their contract recommendation included a review of the components specified in the RFP and the related costs compared to the other proposals. The justification supporting their decision was documented by the Selection Committee Chair.

Similar to RFQ #12-002 above where no points were assigned to the evaluation factors, this RFP specifies sub factors, but does not specify the points assigned to each. In this situation, each Selection Committee member had to individually determine the importance and weight of one sub factor over another to arrive at a score for each factor. Additionally, proposers were not privy to how sub factors were rated within their own proposal or as compared to other bids.

During one of the Selection Committee meetings relating to this RFP, a reviewer questioned the *Public Entity Crimes Affidavit* submitted by one proposer which appeared to have been incorrectly completed. Whether or not required documents are valid and complete would typically be revealed when determining the responsiveness of a proposal. Proposals deemed non-responsive should not be considered by the Selection Committee. It was not clear as to whether this particular proposal had been thoroughly reviewed for responsiveness prior to distribution to the Selection Committee; however, this proposal was not recommended for award.

**Summary:**

OIG staff reviewed CSC policy and procedures related to procurement, specifically *Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County Purchasing Policies* ("Policy"); *Children's Services Council Purchasing Procedures* ("Procedure"); and *RFP Review Process* ("Process"). Based on our review, we note the following:

- Neither the Policy nor Procedure provide specific guidance regarding scoring, rating or ranking of proposals, nor do they outline a process for a Selection Committee to follow when developing and documenting the recommendation for contract award.
- The development of solicitations (RFP, RFQ, etc.), as it relates to the determination of points assigned to factors and sub factors, is not addressed in CSC Policy, Procedure or Process.
- The Process manual identifies CSC Program Services staff as responsible for determining the completeness of proposals. However, the determination of responsiveness and the staff responsible for it are not specifically addressed in Policy, Procedure or Process. Furthermore, CSC indicated that the Process manual is inconsistent with current practice.

It is noted that CSC staff are in the process of updating and revising procurement policies and procedures.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Establish documented procedures relating to Selection Committee responsibilities and activities as they relate to developing recommendations for award of contract(s) and documentation of same.

2. Update policy and procedures relating to the development of competitive solicitations to reflect the process whereby factor and sub factor points are determined and specified in the solicitation.
3. Update policy and procedures to reflect a process whereby proposals are reviewed for determination of responsiveness.

## RESPONSE FROM MANAGEMENT

On September 25, 2012, Ms. Gaetana D. Ebbole, Chief Executive Officer, submitted a response to the OIG recommendations, which stated that the feedback received via this report will assist the CSC in the policy and procedure re-engineering efforts it currently has underway. The complete CSC response is included as Attachment A.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Inspector General's contract oversight staff would like to extend our appreciation to the Children's Services Council management and staff for the cooperation and courtesies extended to us during this review.

*The Office of Inspector General's Contract Oversight Unit is established to review an organization's procurement and contracting activity. When necessary, reports will be issued to: 1) identify areas and/or instances where activity conflicts with an organization's established policies and procedures, and; 2) recommend improvements that will result in more effective and consistent contracting practices.*



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September 25, 2012

Joe Doucette, Chief of Operations  
Office of Inspector General  
P.O. Box 16568  
West Palm Beach, FL 33416

RE: Response to Office of Inspector General Report on CSC Selection Committees

Dear Mr. Doucette:

Thank you for providing the report on Contract Oversight Notification – Selection Committees, dated September 20, 2012. The feedback received via this report will assist the Children's Services Council in the policy and procedure re-engineering efforts it has currently underway.

The Management response to the OIG recommendations follows.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gaetana D. Ebbola".

Gaetana D. Ebbola  
Chief Executive Officer

## **Response to Report on Children's Services Council Selection Committees**

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**OIG Recommendation 1:** *Establish documented procedures relating to selection committee responsibilities and activities as they relate to developing recommendations for award of contract(s) and documentation of same.*

**OIG Recommendation 2:** *Update policy and procedures relating to the development of competitive solicitations to reflect the process whereby factor and sub-factor points are determined and specified in the solicitation.*

**OIG Recommendation 3:** *Update policy and procedures to reflect a process whereby proposals are reviewed for determination of responsiveness.*

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### **Management Response to Recommendations:**

1. CSC acknowledges that the existing written procedure needs updating to be consistent with current business practices. Work is in progress to establish organization-wide procedures for the development of bid documents regardless of the nature of the procurement focus area (i.e. program, operations, technical, general services). The procedures will include criteria for identifying selection team members, standardizing criteria for review and selection, and documenting all actions and decisions.
2. In determining selection criteria, consideration may include factors such as: general knowledge, understanding of what services CSC is seeking and experience in providing the services; capacity to provide the services; qualifications; quality and/or cost reasonableness. Procedures will reflect these considerations. While we appreciate the recommendation to pre-determine and include sub-factors in the RFP; our experience has been that this type of detail tends to benefit proposers with experienced grant writers who focus their response on the scoring elements rather than on the thought process necessary to fully develop a program. CSC will consider providing definitions or examples for this criterion to support CSC's internal process in developing the rating tool, and to help the proposer understand the objective of the RFP.
3. The existing written procedure will be updated to include detailed instructions for receipt of proposals, security of proposals, determining responsiveness/completeness of proposals, conducting the technical review of proposals, and documenting all actions and decisions.

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### **Summary Response:**

CSC continues to work towards enhancing internal control mechanisms including policies, procedures, and related oversight activities, to ensure CSC objectives are met. As noted in the OIG report, CSC is currently in the process of updating and revising Procurement policies and procedures. As part of this effort, two major process re-engineering efforts are near completion:

1. Revisions to CSC's Procurement Policy were approved by the Council on June 21, 2012 and all corresponding operational procurement procedures will be completed by December 31, 2012; and
2. A cross-functional team has been working since May 2012 to update CSC's request for proposal (RFP) process. Key components of the RFP process improvement efforts address the recommendations in the OIG report. The completed package will include well-defined methodologies, timelines, roles and responsibilities, process maps, templates and checklists, documentation, and communication strategies for each phase of a solicitation process. Release of the *RFP Framework* is projected for November 2012.