The Concepts of **Responsiveness** and **Responsibility**

The concepts of “responsiveness” and “responsibility” involve two of the few principles in public contracting that are interpreted and practiced almost universally.

Despite their widespread use in the government arena, “responsiveness” and “responsibility” are frequently misinterpreted and misunderstood. That can be a bitter irony since the two concepts can be the keys to a business winning or losing a government contract.

Below is an explanation of these two very important terms – so very important to every business competing in the government marketplace!

**Responsiveness** has to do with the bid or proposal *document*.*

In order for a bid to be declared “responsive,” the bid document must:

- be prepared exactly in accordance with the terms of the solicitation,
- be submitted on time and delivered to the specified location, and
- indicate no exceptions or objections to the solicitation requirements.

**Responsibility** refers to the *entity* submitting the bid or proposal – the bidder or proponent or offeror, in other words.

In order for the bidder/proponent/offeror to be determined “responsible,” the Government must make an affirmative determination that the entity has the *wherewithal* to perform, including:

- adequate financial resources,
- compliance with the delivery requirements,
- prior satisfactory performance,
- a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics,
- adequate management and technical skills,
- adequate facilities/equipment, and
- is otherwise eligible to receive an award.

* Note: The GAO and the Court of Federal Claims use the word “acceptable” to describe a *proposal* that complies, in all material respects, with the request for proposals.

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