

IFI Bidding Success Factors and Support Needs

many rules regarding format and content that much be followed exactly or else the firm's bid will be judged non-compliant. This is different from proposals to the private sector, or proposals to a Canadian government department, for example. The latter will require resumes, for example, but seldom insist that all bidders use exactly the same resume format as stipulated in the Request for Proposals. This is just one example of a myriad of bureaucratic specifications and regulations, for goods and services, that govern whether a proposal is responsive or not. The result is a barrier to entry for SMEs and for occasional bidders. A significant investment is needed in learning the IFI rules and approaches which can be amortized over a reasonable number of bids only by companies who intend to work regularly in this market.

Comments by Interviewees

General comments on understanding the IFIs and proposal skills:

- Even for relatively simple goods, such as furniture, the tender specifications are generally very complex. [303]
- One has to know the *"true proposal assessment criteria one level deeper than the formal evaluation grid."* [10]
- The company conducts a risk assessment before it commits itself to a marketing effort. It considers two probabilities – what is the %chance of the project actually going ahead, and what is the %chance of the company winning the work if it does go ahead? The rule of thumb is to bid if there is a 50% chance overall. [10]
- The ADB and the WB call for different strategies because one can work for the ADB on both the identification/preparation phases and the subsequent loan, but not for the World Bank on both. [10]
- Every job requires specialists the company does not have entirely in house. The ability to find the right people quickly is vital. [15]
- Each piece of work has to pay its own way. However, the potential for follow-on work is important in deciding whether to bid or not. Often the individual project in isolation might not justify the necessary effort – so one has to have a longer-term commitment to working in this sector or country as well. [31]
- Access to information that will enable the team to do an excellent proposal – including access to key documents such as the project approval document, the country economic report and perhaps the most recent IMF report, and, often, a sector or thematic report. These can be essential to ascertaining what is really needed. The project summary and terms of reference are not enough to enable the team to truly understand the requirement. [31]
- Keeping to a crisp timetable in producing the proposal. [31]