

IFI Bidding Success Factors and Support Needs

Development Bank. The Export Financing Division constructed a database of companies that have won contracts in IFI-funded projects over the past five years. These companies are prime contractors. Other Canadian companies that have been sub-contractors on these and other projects do not appear. The sample of companies for this round of consultations was selected from this database. The sample was selected to be representative of the type of company, the regions of Canada, the IFI-funder, borrower countries [or blocs of countries], sector, type of contract [goods or services], size of contract, size of company, and experience with bidding IFI-funded contracts based on the number of contracts won over the past five years.

In each company in the consultations sample, the team identified the key person to interview. This person was the one most knowledgeable about IFI-related bidding. In some cases this was the chief executive or chief operating officer, and in other cases it was the head of marketing or a person dedicated to international marketing. Companies were interviewed in the areas centred on Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. The industrial sectors included transportation, hydro energy, manufacturing, information technology, transportation, oil and gas, tertiary education, geomatics, municipal infrastructure, software, remote sensing hardware, agriculture, resort hotels, major construction projects, multimedia, law, railway rolling stock, rural electrification and telecommunications.

1.3 Methodology

Wherever possible, the consultations were conducted as face-to-face in-depth interviews at the office of the interviewee. In a few cases several people from the company participated in one interview. In some cases, as indicated in Annex 1, the interview was held on the telephone. In-person interviewing was time consuming but it elicited a rich set of comments and suggestions. In particular, the level of candour with which the interviewees responded would likely have been impossible to elicit any other way. Previous consultative surveys on the telephone were less successful in drawing out some of the concerns of the companies. Nevertheless, the present research was built on previous work conducted by the DFAIT OLIFIs, CPAT and others in the 1990s.

Interview guides for the consultations were based on a structured questionnaire. The interviewees were invited to identify the most important issues for discussion and the interview was largely guided by their priorities. However each interview sought, at a minimum, to complete the following tasks: review the core services provided by the Trade Commissioner Service [TCS] to its clients; understand the critical success factors which lead to the winning of IFI-funded contracts; determine what variables and inhibiting factors can influence the outcome of a bid; identify the key players and information tools that assisted the winning companies; and investigate what value the TCS provides to its clients.

Each in-person interview was written up by the consultant, as a contemporaneous record, within 24 hours of the interview. When there was a second interviewer she checked the transcript. In every case the transcript was sent to the interviewee to read, to amend and to add to, if he or she wished. It should be kept in mind that, as mentioned above, the consultations so far were exclusively with companies that had been successful in IFI