

IFI Bidding Success Factors and Support Needs

- The World Bank [by far the dominant IFI financially] has decentralized, with the result that country offices have become much more important relative to headquarters. Coupled with the increased industrial sophistication of many developing countries, this trend means that marketing has to be more focused on the client country not the IFI.
- The "old economy" has rapidly receded before the new. Services, broadly defined, are no longer the minor player – they have been where almost all of the growth and jobs have been.
- Companies all over the world, including in Canada, have rushed to "globalize". The international competition has greatly intensified.
- There are many experienced agents in the private sector capable of providing proprietary information to client companies about bid opportunities and requirements. Companies are seeking marketing assistance that conveys a competitive advantage, not broadcast assistance that empowers competitors equally.

This new context demands a new strategy if DFAIT-TCS is to remain relevant in the IFI markets. The old strategy was focused on neophyte exporters, preferably in manufacturing, who needed basic assistance that could be provided by generalist trade commissioners to identify contacts and bid opportunities, and to meet IFI procedural requirements.

The new strategy can be discerned in the comments of the interviewees. It would recognize that obtaining basic information is now easier but winning proposal and bid efforts are more difficult. The new strategy would address the competitiveness issue more directly, and would be country-focused more than IFI-focused.

It was not the responsibility of this study team to formulate a new strategy, but rather to report what a particular set of experienced companies think is needed. In summary, their messages included the following points:

A new strategy should acknowledge that this is a difficult market – risky, expensive to bid, highly competitive, difficult to manage, and often rife with logistical, business, ethical and political problems. However, for many companies, it can be a very profitable market if they are successful.

Once again one has to keep in mind that the interviewees were experienced companies that have had some success in the IFI markets. Therefore their suggestions reflect their needs. DFAIT intends to extend these consultations to less experienced companies and organizations in the next phase of work.

The interviewees made many recommendations that are noted in the various sections of the report. Their key observations were as follows:

1. Canada needs a more integrated marketing support effort – at present the effort is too