*Ken Blair (Voiceover):* Everybody, welcome to the Federal Proposal Podcast.

Ken Blair: Those of you who have been following this pdcast know I had an allergy problem back in late September and early October. Well, I followed that up with a sinus issue that waylaid me for most of November. I’ve mostly beaten that problem (occasional coughing fits notwithstanding) and am coming back with a special edition on an action that every organization should take when they lose a bid – a proposal post mortem.

When they lose abid, most organizations will ask for a debrief from the Government to get insight as to why they lost and in most case it will be do to pricing be too high or unrealistic. But recognize the Contracting Officer’s first allegiance is to the Government and that while they will be truthful in the debrief information they will be careful in what they divulge to try and ensure that you won’t protest their award decision. This means you will have little new information to better your bid process and, ultimately, the quality of your responses to Government solicitations.

So, what do you do? One activity I try to take after every lost bid is a review that I call a proposal post mortem (or PPM).

A PPM is designed to provide an independent review by a third party (either organic or external) without the pressure typically present during the actual response process to see where the technical content of the response may have fallen short. So let’s take a quick look at the who, the PPM process, the outcome, and the cost of a PPM.

**The Who**. The Proposal Manager and proposal team can certainly perform a PPM-like review and many organizations do so under the guise of a lessons learned” session. These sessions typical take place before the bid results are known and are very much driven by a what went wrong during the response slant. They will identify bad players from within and without the organization but don’t look at the actual product delivered to the Government.

A better approach is to take the debrief from the Government and have a third party review your technical content to see where it may have fallen short from either a compliance or a responsiveness perspective. The third party can be an uninvolved proposal manager or someone else with the capture organization other than the involved capture manager. It can, and for smaller organizations should, be a third party consultant since smaller organization tend to have more utilization of of capture and proposal resources across all reponses.

**The PPM Process:** A PPM will entail matching the last set of solicitations documents to response to determines where there may be any failures in the response. There can be any number of failures and they may include:

* Minor compliance issues that by themselves didn’t warrant disqualification but did indocate a lack of attention to detail which could be used to increase risk ratings.
* Failure to use the Government’s language and terms which can be interpreted as a lack of understanding the requirements
* Not responding to the requirements
* Not recognizing what the Government requirements are versus the incumbent’s view of “we know what they want/need”

I’ve done a number of reviews over the years and have seen all of the above issues that were not seen by any review teams. In my worst case example, I was asked to perform a review for an organization after they had filed a protest. They wanted to use a third party review as part of the basis for their protest. During y review of the first 10 pages of their technical document I was able to identify over three pages of issues that either should have disqualified them or showed a distinct lack of connection with the Government’s requirements. They immediately dropped their protest.

As to the who part of the equation, regardless of how isolated a proposal manager or capture person may be from a solicitation, if they are internal to the organization, they are somewhat tainted in the PPM process. That’s why we recommend an outside third party (consultant or otherwise) be the one who performs the PPM.

**The Outcome.** The outcome of the PPM should be a report that shows what documents were reviewed, specific instances of nonconformities (failures), and recommendations, where appropriate

The Cost: A PPM is not a time-consuming effort unless the solicitation and the response are of significant size. For small response those under 50 pages the time required should be less than 5 hours, for responses between 50 and 150 pages, 10 hours should be sufficient. For larger (or more complex) responses, expect a longer timeline and budget accordingly.

It’s probably a good idea to have at least two or three PPMs performed to see if any identified issues are trending within your organization so they can be readily addressed by your capture/proposal management.

We can provide PPM services at either a T&M rate or at a fixed price. Call us at 301-859-0316 or email us at ken.blair@fedprops.com to get a quote.

And now from our sponsor: If you’re a small to medium size business looking for an affordable enterprise-level solution for business development and capture management, reachout to David Nealey at WordSmart and ask about their Proposal Essentials Plus suite. Use code Foxtrot Papa Papa, that’s FPP, and see what they can do for your organization. Call David at 720-725-0009.

That’s it for this special episode. I would like to thank all the folks that have taken the time to listen or download this podcast. With a flurry of activity in last couple of weeks we have reached over 675 downloads and the numbers are growing with each episode. We’ll be releasing our major Episode on December 9th (Next Wednesday).

As always, feedback is appreciated at ken.blair@fedprops.com. Suggestions for iv`mprovements or suggested topics are always welcome

Thanks for listening.