

Implementing Order



Implementing Order No.: IO 2-13

Title: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING LEGAL OPINIONS WITH RESPECT TO COUNTY COMPETITIVE PROCESSES

Ordered: 7/6/2023

Effective: 7/16/2023

AUTHORITY:

Section 1.01 and 5.03(D) of the Miami-Dade County Home Rule Charter and Section 2-8.4 of the Code of Miami-Dade County.

SCOPE:

Notwithstanding any contrary provision of any other Administrative Order or Implementing Order, it is the policy of the Board that the procedures expressed in this Implementing Order shall be applicable to and shall govern administrative requests for and opinions rendered by the County Attorney's Office in connection with any competitive process of the County, its agencies, and administrative boards, including the Public Health Trust. The opinions covered shall include any relating to the responsiveness of any bidder or proposer where the determination may affect the outcome of the solicitation. This Implementing Order is directory in nature only, designed to guide the administration and the County Attorney's Office in the rendering of such opinions, and is not intended to create any rights for any participant in a bid contest or other proceeding.

DEFINITIONS:

Responsiveness: Responsiveness deals with a bidder or proposer's unequivocal promise, as shown on the face of the response to the solicitation, to provide the items or services called for by the material terms of the solicitation. Responsiveness typically involves matters of form; a responsive bid or proposal means one submitted at the correct time and place, in the correct forms, containing all required information and signatures. Responsiveness deals with whether the effect of a deviation from a solicitation would deprive the County of its assurance that a contract will be entered into, performed, and guaranteed according to the County's specified requirements and whether a deviation would adversely affect the competitive process by placing a bidder or proposer in a position of advantage over other bidders or proposers or by otherwise undermining the necessary common standard of competition. Examples of issues involving responsiveness include whether a bid or proposal was signed, whether a bid or proposal bond was posted, and whether a bidder or proposer qualified a response by stating that it would provide something less than what was called for. Responsiveness issues are generally not curable after bid or proposal submission as the bidder or proposer could opt in or out of the process at its will, depriving the County of a valid offer and placing that bidder or proposer at a material advantage over other responders who have made firm offers.

Section 2-8.4(a) of Code of Miami-Dade County provides that before the Board or any committee hears any protests of a competitive bid or request for proposal, or request for qualifications, administrative staff shall request the County Attorney to determine whether the bid or proposal in question is responsive. Sec. 2-8.4(a) further provides that the Board

and any committee shall be bound by the determination of the County Attorney with regard to the issue of responsiveness.

Responsibility: Responsibility deals with whether the bidder or proposer can perform as provided in the solicitation. In general, solicitation requirements for information relating to a bidder or proposer's financial condition, capability, experience, and past performance pertain to responsibility. The term responsible is not limited in its meaning to financial resources and capabilities but include a bidder or proposer's honesty and integrity, skill and business judgment, experience, and capacity for carrying out the proposed work, previous conduct under other contracts and the quality of previous work performed. The terms of a solicitation document cannot ordinarily change an issue of responsibility into one of responsiveness. A bidder or proposer need not demonstrate compliance with solicitation requirements pertaining to its responsibility in order for its bid or proposal to be deemed responsive and evaluated. Information regarding a bidder or proposer's responsibility may be furnished up to the time of award.

Determinations of bidder or proposal responsibility are ultimately made by the Board of County Commissioners, or in those instances of delegated authority, by the County Mayor or Mayor's designee, with the advice of the County's professional staff and/or selection and negotiation committees. Issues of responsibility are fundamentally ones of business judgment and policy and should not be covered in responsiveness determinations of the County Attorney's Office.

POLICY:

The County Mayor or Mayor's designee or other person authorized by the Public Health Trust, or an agency or administrative board of the County may issue a written request for a Responsiveness Opinion to the County Attorney's Office when an issue of responsiveness is identified in response to a solicitation that will affect the ultimate award of the solicitation. For any contract in an amount which exceed the threshold for award by the Board of County Commissioners set forth in Section 2-8.1 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, or any contract matter which will be considered by the Board of County Commissioners or the Public Health Trust the County Attorney's Opinion shall be in writing and submitted to the Board, the Public Health Trust or other body along with the award recommendation. Informal opinions in contract matters that do not exceed the threshold amount or that may be awarded pursuant to delegated authority may be issued by the County Attorney's Office.

Questions relating the Conflict of interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, including any concerning the application of the Cone of Silence, shall be referred to the Executive Director or legal staff of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust.

PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING RESPONSIVENESS OPINIONS:

The County Mayor or Mayor's designee or other authorized person, shall prepare a written request for opinion. At a minimum, the request shall describe the specific issue raising the question of responsiveness, identify the relevant provisions of the specification documents which bear on the issue, and be accompanied by all relevant documentation including the solicitation and the responses under investigation. Staff shall meet with the County Attorney's Office as necessary to understand and address the issue. In the event that the County Mayor or Mayor's designee or other person authorized to request a Responsiveness Opinion cannot deliver a written request of opinion with sufficient time for

the County Attorney's Office to issue an opinion on a timely basis, the Responsiveness Opinion shall so state and shall identify the factual basis for the opinion.

TIMING AND SCOPE OF REQUESTS FOR RESPONSIVENESS OPINIONS:

For Requests for Proposals and other solicitation processes utilizing selection committees, negotiating committees or similar selection processes, the County Mayor or County Mayor's designee or such other authorized person shall review all proposals upon receipt to identify potential responsiveness issues and submit in writing any identified questions to the County Attorney's Office for a Responsiveness Opinion within ten (10) calendar days following the deadline for submitting proposals or bids. The County Attorney's Office shall provide any applicable Responsiveness Opinion within thirty (30) calendar days after receiving the written request for an opinion accompanied by all pertinent documentation from the County Mayor or County Mayor's designee.

For Invitations to Bid and other solicitation processes relying exclusively on price that do not utilize a selection committee as the selection criteria, Responsiveness Opinions shall be requested of the top bidder recommended for award where the administrative staff has identified a potential responsiveness issue.

The County Mayor or County Mayor's designee shall not submit responsiveness inquiries when the issue of responsiveness is irrelevant to the proposed action or to the type of solicitation involved. Ordinarily, for example, the County Mayor or Mayor's designee need not request responsiveness determinations in connection with a recommendation of rejection of all bids because the low bid exceeds the project budget, or in instances where the County seeks to establish open pools based on qualifications alone.

The failure to submit such inquiries to the County Attorney's Office in accordance with this Implementing Order shall not constitute a waiver of any non-conformity. In the event the County Mayor or County Mayor's designee fails to timely submit a responsiveness inquiry as provided herein, the County Mayor shall include a written explanation of such failure and the causes in the Mayor's recommendation to the Board on the solicitation. The deadlines in this Implementing Order address the County's internal administrative processes and are not intended to serve as a basis to challenge the ultimate selection or contract award recommendation in any particular procurement action or to create any rights for any participant in a bid contest or other proceeding.

PRESENTATION OF RESPONSIVENESS OPINION TO THE BOARD:

Written Responsiveness Opinions shall be contained in the agenda package where the related matter is presented to the Board for consideration. In addition, if any of the deadlines established in this Implementing Order are missed, then the County Mayor shall disclose the missed deadlines and the department that missed the relevant deadline in the County Mayor's memorandum contained in the agenda package where the related matter is presented to the Board for consideration. If new facts are discovered or a mistake is made, or any other change is made to an opinion, the County Attorney's Office shall issue a revised opinion, stating expressly that the prior opinion has been revised and superseded and the latest opinion shall be made available to the County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners.

The County Attorney's Office shall maintain a record of all written Responsiveness Opinions rendered.

EFFECTIVE DATE:

This Implementing Order shall be effective after approval by the Board of County Commissioners.