

Quality: team effort for Hill directorate

by Donna Brown
Hilltop Times staff writer

The successful government contractor is no stranger to paperwork.

Contractors know their products have to meet strict standards of quality to be considered by the government. Quality, accuracy, timeliness and reasonable cost are all essential factors for a contractor who wants to serve Uncle Sam.

But, the experienced contractor knows a major key to dealing with the Department of Defense is knowing how to play the paper game.

Hill AFB's Directorate of Contracting and Manufacturing has formed a process action team with one of the Air Force's largest contractors, Boeing Aerospace of Seattle. Boeing provides products and engineering services associated with the Minuteman and Peacekeeper missiles.

Together, they will review contract proposals and negotiation processes to decide whether regulations and procedures can be streamlined to make it easier for both entities to negotiate a contract.

"There might be good companies out there that have quality products and could provide us with good service, but that have become so totally frustrated with the system, they give up," said Paul Larsen, chief of PM's pricing and finance division. "It shouldn't be a marathon just to try to do business."

The PAT, composed of members from both sides, meets once a month to share concerns about the complicated contract process, time-saving ideas and, ultimately, taxpayers' dollars.

The PAT relationship with the contractor is the only one of its kind at Hill and, according to Mr. Lar-



U.S. Air Force Photo by Donna Brown

... and more paperwork

Paul Larsen, chief of the Directorate of Contracting and Manufacturing's pricing and finance division, left, and Ed Hyde, Boeing contract manager (Ogden), go over paperwork.

sen, there are very few PATs involving contractors in the Air Force Logistics Command.

The team's mutual goal is to review the proposal and negotiating process from the time a request for contractors' proposals is issued to the time a contract is awarded. A request for proposal contains the Air Force requirements, such as specifications, the

required quantity, delivery date and required contract clauses.

"This team has laid the groundwork to ensure their analyses and recommendations will significantly improve the proposal and negotiating process," said Rich Diehl, procurement analyst and quality facilitator for PM.

Based on the request for proposal, the contractor prepares a detailed listing of estimated material and subcontract costs, labor hours, projected labor rates, overhead costs and profit. Often the proposals consist of several hundred pages of financial and technical information.

Once Contracting and Manufacturing receives the proposal, it is reviewed for adequacy and submitted to experts in individual fields for analysis of the various costs.

The contractor and the Air Force use this information to negotiate a fair and reasonable price before awarding a contract.

"We know there's a cost involved with doing business with the government," Mr. Larsen said. "And in order to cut costs, we have to look at things that cost time or effort. Whether it costs us or them, it ultimately ends up costing the taxpayer."

This PAT concentrates on the process as it applies to large businesses, specifically sole-source contractors. Mr. Larsen said the idea of getting together with the contractor is to identify unneeded or impractical regulations. These regulations can then be modified or deleted.

The improvements made as a result of this unique PAT could trickle down through the entire contract process and benefit many more government contractors.

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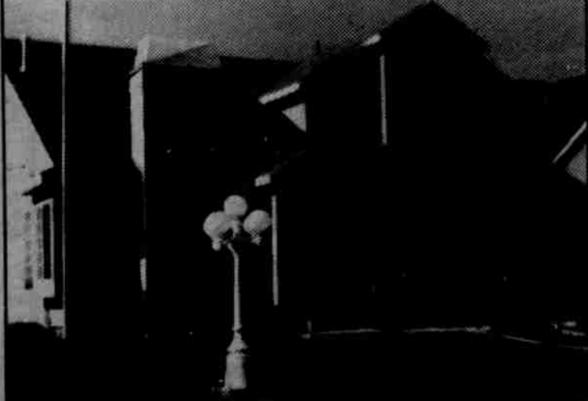
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