

# Proposals Preparation Guide

## A Structured Approach for Preparing Construction Bids

### Introduction

Companies can significantly improve project acquisition when preparing proposals if they use a structured approach based on the industry's best practices for managing projects.

This document introduces two tools which provide a framework for managing proposal preparation, using well-known and accepted project management practices: the Proposals Management Guide (PPG) and the accompanying Proposal Management System (PMS). Together they ensure that you can make better proposals, quicker and at a lower cost, which are more likely to win projects.

### The Problem: Ad-hoc Preparation

The all too common practice of proposal preparation is an ad-hoc approach, often resorting to copying and modifying documents from previous proposals. The pace is hectic and there is a distinct lack of rigour and control. The primary goal is to deliver *something* before the deadline. The technical and financial details of actual proposal tend to become secondary considerations.

If your company uses this approach then you face serious risks:

- Disqualification due to misunderstandings or failing to submit a critical document
- Gaps, where you fail to account for one of the client's technical requirements
- Additions, where you propose something the client will not pay for
- Inadequate financial analysis, resulting in either not being selected or a guaranteed loss
- The client's perception that your disorganised proposal will lead to a disorganised project

Poor proposals do not win projects. Even if you get the job, a badly prepared proposal will make the project start-up difficult. The increasingly short lead times between signing the contract and project start date mean that the proposal documents are not only *bidding* documents, they are the *start-up documents* for the project itself.

Without a solid foundation, it will be difficult to mobilise without assistance from the proposal team, who are either away on another project, or who cannot remember the details. Once mobilisation starts there is no time to recover the information necessary to set up the necessary project structure and management processes.

### The Solution: A Structured Approach

The secret is applying the industry's best practices for managing projects to the proposal preparation process. At the core is a standardised Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and set of Work Packages. These define the intermediate and final deliverables (expressed as lists of tasks and documents) which must be produced in order to complete the proposal.

The approach is easy to implement because industry professionals are already familiar with the basic principles. It puts particular focus on:

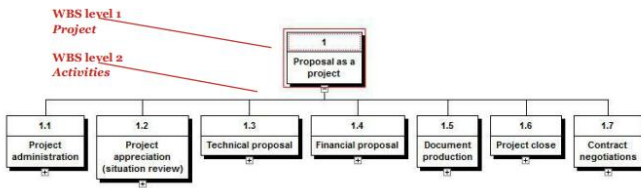
- *Project appreciation* – understanding the client's requirements and the local situation
- *Defining the technical solution* – the baseline activity from which all proposal documents are derived
- *Electronic content management* – so that dispersed teams can still track document status and download the latest versions
- *Project document library* – the foundation for collaboration on the proposal and for field mobilising upon contract award

The methodology is easy to implement because industry professionals are already familiar with the basic principles. Using it you can produce better quality proposals that are more likely to win projects.

# Proposals Preparation Guide / Two Tools

## PROPOSALS PREPARATION GUIDE

### 4.1 Proposal Work Structure (PWS)



The Proposals Preparation Guide (PPG) – The ‘how to’ handbook prepared by experts who have more than fifteen years of hands-on proposal preparation experience on international construction projects. The PPG is a textbook that describes the basic principals of proposal preparation, the basic elements of a proposal and the process preparation process. It contains lists of all the tasks and documents that must be completed, including method statements and document templates for each item.

- The definitive handbook on engineering project proposal preparation
- Structured approach based on well-known project management processes
- Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) developed specifically for proposal preparation work
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Checklist of all documents and tasks to complete
- Method statements for all tasks and documents
- Focus on project appreciation and technical concept development
- Staged with ‘go/no-go’ decisions during the process
- Easily understood procedures suitable for staff with limited experience
- Builds a solid foundation for project mobilisation
- Helps you save time and resources,
- Helps you write produce better proposals and win projects

## PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

### New Document

<b>Identification</b>	
Type	Standard, Norm, Regulation
Document Code	DOC-0020 <input type="button" value="Check"/>
Author	<input type="button" value="+ New"/>
Originating Organisation	<input type="button" value="+ New"/>
Abstract	<input type="button" value="+ New"/>
External Key	<input type="button" value="+ New"/>
<b>Folder</b>	
Folder	1.4.2 - Reimbursables
<b>Classification</b>	
Engineering Discipline	3 - Financial Analyst <input type="button" value="+ New"/>
Contractually Binding	Yes

The Proposal Management System (PMS) – An online electronic task and document management system, developed by SoftXS, a Swiss company with over ten years experience supplying document and project management systems and services major international engineering projects. The PMS is the online repository where the proposal team works together. It is pre-configured with all proposal elements described in the PPG. The PMS is also suitable for use as a document and task management system during the project.

- Web-based electronic task and document management system
- Pre-configured for proposal work for engineering projects
- Folder structure matches proposal’s WBS
- Suitable for multi-company teams in multiple locations
- List of all team members including roles and contact details
- Online access to latest revisions of all documents
- Records discussion notes about tasks and document production
- Restricts access to confidential documents (financial proposal, staff rates, etc.)
- Library of reference and background documents
- Engineering classification of documents and tasks
- Suitable as a project management and document management system

Pre-print copies of *The Proposals Preparation Guide, A Structured Approach to Preparing Construction Bids*, by Robert Bartlett and Alan Hodgkinson, are available for review to selected consultants. The Proposal Management System is available from SoftXS.

Contact: Alan Hodgkinson, alan@softxs.ch, telephone +41-79-432-1014. www.softxs.ch