



JENKINS ENTERPRISES, LLC

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SAMPLE OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

Commercial RFP

Custodial and housekeeping management services • RFP SMU-20250920 • Private buyer • Closed

The requirement

Buyer	Southern Methodist University
Buyer type	Private university, Texas nonprofit corporation
Requirement	Custodial and Housekeeping Management Services Program
RFP number	SMU-20250920
Location	Main campus, Dallas, TX
Scale	56 buildings, 3,080,956 sq ft net cleanable
Standard	APPA Level 2 campus wide, Level 1 at two facilities
Term	Base term plus three one year renewals, buyer's option
Payment terms	Net 30 after acceptance
Termination	Either party, 90 days, for convenience
References	Three accounts similar in size and scope
Set aside	None. No certification gate of any kind.

Source: Custodial Services RFP published by SMU Purchasing: <https://www.smu.edu/-/media/site/businessfinance/purchasing/smu-janitorial-services-rfp.pdf> Square footage is the sum of the net cleanable space table the RFP publishes building by building. Acronyms: RFP is a Request for Proposal. APPA is APPA Leadership in Educational Facilities, whose five cleanliness levels are the industry standard for custodial specifications. Level 1 is Orderly Spotlessness, Level 2 is Ordinary Tidiness. COI is a Certificate of Insurance.

What they were actually buying

The title says custodial and housekeeping. The word doing the work is Management. The RFP asks the winner to run a Quality Assurance Program built on the contractor's own Total Facilities Management or similar program, with quality assurance inspections, reports and dashboards, and work order management. Evaluation factors include the firm's fleet, dispatch process, response time commitment, software, and record keeping.

That is not a cleaning specification. That is a request for an operating platform, with cleaning delivered inside it. A crew that cleans beautifully and invoices on a spreadsheet does not answer the question being asked.

The scope itself is also more specialized than the title suggests. Annual residential flips and move in, move out turns. Summer conference and camp coverage. Truck mounted foam carpet extraction. Bodily fluid removal and disposal in non restricted areas. A separate LEED protocol for one building. Brass handrail polishing. Snow and ice at entrances. Umbrella sleeve replenishment. Under Texas Education Code Section 51.976, any employee with contact with minors in a campus program for minors must complete approved abuse prevention training.

The four gates

The same four gates we run on a federal solicitation. What changes in a commercial pursuit is that gate one usually opens, which is exactly why operators lose money here.

GATE 01 • ELIGIBILITY

PASS

You are fully eligible, and that is a trap

There is no set aside, no certification requirement, no registration portal, and no minimum years in business or revenue floor stated anywhere in the document. Anyone can submit. In federal work an eligibility gate does you a favor, it tells you no before you spend anything. Here nothing tells you no, so the discipline has to come from you. Eligible is not the same as competitive.

GATE 02 • SCOPE FIT

QUALIFIED

The cleaning fits. The management layer and the insurance may not.

The insurance exhibit is not aspirational, it is a submission requirement. General liability at one million per occurrence and two million aggregate, auto liability at one million combined single limit any auto, employer's liability at one million, insurers rated A.M. Best A-III or better, SMU named additional insured on general, auto, and excess liability, waiver of subrogation, and three years of tail coverage on any claims made policy. A current Certificate of Insurance goes in with the proposal and has to clear the Office of Risk Management before your pricing is ever read. If your limits are below that on the day proposals are due, you are not late, you are non responsive.

GATE 03 • COMPETITIVE POSITION

FAIL

Three million square feet asks for three references that look like three million square feet

The RFP requires three references from accounts similar in size and scope. Similar in scope to fifty six buildings and three million square feet. That single sentence is the real screen, and it is harder to clear than any certification. Combined with the request for a Total Facilities Management program, fleet, and dispatch, the document is describing a national facilities services firm. Pricing is explicitly only one component of selection, so a lower number does not buy you past a reference gap.

GATE 04 • ECONOMICS

QUALIFIED

Net 30 on a campus this size, with a 90 day exit on the other side

Payment is due thirty days after SMU accepts the services and approves the invoice, and invoices must be submitted within ninety days of performance. That is reasonable commercial paper, and it still means you fund several payroll cycles on a large workforce before the first check clears. Either party can terminate for convenience on ninety days notice, so the three renewal years are the buyer's option, not your revenue plan. Staffing this scope means hiring at scale against a contract that can end in a quarter.

RECOMMENDATION

Do not bid. Not because you are shut out, because you would not have been believed.

A firm doing under a million dollars in annual revenue can clean any building on that campus. It cannot produce three references at three million square feet, a facilities management platform with dashboards and work order software, or a fleet and dispatch narrative. The proposal would be honest and it would still lose, and it would cost you the same eighty to a hundred hours the federal one would have.

The useful part is that we can tell you that in an afternoon, from the published document, before you commit a single hour to writing.

What we would do instead

01 — Fix the insurance before it costs you a bid

Get your limits to one million and two million now

General liability at one million per occurrence and two million aggregate, auto at one million combined single limit, and the ability to issue additional insured endorsements and waivers of subrogation on request. That is not this buyer's preference, it is the floor across institutional and corporate procurement. Raising it is a phone call to your broker and a premium line item. Not having it disqualifies you silently, over and over, from requirements you were otherwise good enough to win.

02 — Bid the subcontract, not the prime

Go at the specialty scopes, or go at the winner

Read the exclusions list. Exterior window and window system cleaning, interior glass above ten feet, refinishing and resurfacing specialty floors, environmental hazard removal, area rug and drapery cleaning, all explicitly out of scope. Those are separate buys, they are sized for a firm your size, and they are how you get a reference on the letterhead of an institution this large. The same logic applies to the eventual prime, who will subcontract specialty work.

03 — Build the reference ladder deliberately

Target the requirement one rung above what you hold

Three references similar in size and scope is the gate in almost every commercial custodial RFP you will ever see. That makes past performance a compounding asset and the actual constraint on your growth. The pursuit worth authorizing is the largest one your current three references can credibly support, not the largest one you can find.

What we could not tell you, and why

This is the honest difference between commercial and federal work, and it is worth understanding before you decide where to compete.

On the federal example we could tell you the award value, the number of offers received, and the name of the winner, because federal award data is published. On this one we cannot. The RFP states that SMU will keep proposals confidential, that it may award to one or multiple firms at its sole discretion, and that it does not guarantee any agreement will result. There is no public bid tabulation, no notice of award, and no way to learn what the winner charged. Commercial buyers are not required to tell anyone, and they generally do not.

So a commercial analysis is built from the four corners of the document plus what we can verify about the buyer, and the competitive read is inference rather than record. We will tell you which one you are getting. An analysis that presents a guess as a figure is worse than no analysis.

ABOUT THIS EXAMPLE

This solicitation is closed, which is why we are willing to publish the analysis. Live pursuits under a client engagement are covered by a mutual non disclosure agreement and are never published. Jenkins Enterprises has no relationship with Southern Methodist University and did not participate in this procurement. Every requirement quoted above is from the RFP as SMU published it. The recommendation is written against the profile of a commercial cleaning or facilities firm doing under one million dollars in annual revenue. A larger firm would get a different answer, which is the reason the analysis exists.

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