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AI in Public Procurement: The Changing Role of Human Judgment

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Governments have historically been slower to adopt emerging technologies than their private-sector counterparts, and artificial intelligence ("AI") is no exception. Yet as AI tools become more accessible and agencies begin utilizing them, AI will play a growing role in public procurement. Although much of the discussion has focused on efficiency, AI also raises important questions about proposal quality, human judgment, and evaluation that could shape how the competitive bidding process evolves.

One certainty in this still-developing landscape is that **proper training will be critical.** Procurement professionals and proposers alike will need to learn how to write effective prompts, evaluate AI-generated output, and identify errors or omissions. Proposers, in particular, will need to ensure that AI-generated content still meets the solicitation's requirements and accurately reflects the proposer's qualifications, capabilities, and proposed approach. AI tools are only as effective as the prompts they receive and the professionals who use them; without meaningful training, users risk relying on sophisticated tools without fully understanding their limitations.

AI can help proposers organize information, summarize lengthy solicitation materials, and flag potential inconsistencies. But **AI should supplement—not replace—the human role in procurement**. Determining whether a proposal reflects a realistic understanding of a project, whether a proposed approach is truly feasible, or whether a proposal accurately reflects a proposer's experience and ability to deliver requires context and professional intuition. Ultimately, procurement decisions involve more than identifying information in a document; they require human judgment about what that information means.

AI may also change the economics of submitting a proposal. If AI reduces the time and cost of preparing a submission, more firms may find it feasible to respond to solicitations, increasing competition. However, over-reliance on AI could produce submissions that, while polished, are generic, repetitive, or insufficiently tailored to the solicitation. That shift could lead agencies to rely more heavily on **oral presentations and interviews to assess a proposer's actual understanding and capabilities.** To gain a competitive edge, proposers should be prepared to answer project-specific questions and substantiate the commitments made in their responses.

AI's ability to produce large amounts of content may also influence how solicitations are structured. As proposals become easier to produce—and potentially much longer—agencies may respond with stricter page limits or more prescriptive response requirements. In that environment, where quality must trump quantity, **human judgment will become a competitive advantage.** The proposer that can distill a complex technical approach into a concise, accurate, and persuasive response may stand out from competitors that rely on AI to generate lengthy but unfocused submissions.

The lesson here is not to avoid AI, but to **use it strategically**. AI can help streamline proposal development, but it should not substitute for understanding the solicitation, knowing the project, or carefully reviewing the final submission. A proposal that, at first sight, appears sophisticated but fails to address the agency's actual needs could risk being deemed non-responsive and may be less competitive than a shorter proposal that addresses all a solicitation's criteria and demonstrates genuine insight and project-specific understanding.

Although the extent of AI's impact on public procurement remains uncertain, the practical takeaways for proposers are clear. Adequate training will be fundamental, and as proposal preparation becomes more accessible, understanding a solicitation's criteria and delivering a targeted, concise response will matter more than ever. Proposers should also prepare for agencies to place greater weight on oral presentations and interviews and ensure that their teams can explain and support their written submissions. AI may help produce a proposal, but a proposer's judgment, expertise, and preparation will remain critical to success in the competitive procurement process.



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