

DUNDEX and 'competitive selection'

Sourcing and selecting the best consultants is a competitive process, where the primary focus must be on the candidates' competency and suitability for the job. Their 'host' company is important, too, but a secondary factor in competitive recruitment.

This conclusion is best explained by an analogy : let us say that a Nairobi-based UN agency, through a competitive process, has selected a highly suitable candidate, Ms XXX, who is an Associate of DUNDEX. She lives in New Delhi and needs to fly from there to Nairobi to start her work. Having found the right person, the UN agency is not expected to go through another (parallel) competitive process to find 'the right airline'. What is needed is a service : air transport from New Delhi to Nairobi, and this can be legitimately provided by any airline which (a) has a good safety record, (b) enjoys a reputation for reliability and punctuality, and (c) offers competitively-priced air tickets.

DUNDEX is a 'delivery mechanism', just like the airlines are. If a competitively selected candidate wants to 'fly with DUNDEX', because she is an Associate of DUNDEX, then the hiring UN agency needs not go through a second full-scale competitive process. The need for 'due diligence' is adequately served by a simple verification that DUNDEX meets the following three basic criteria :

- 1) It must be a reputable and reliable company which is an approved/registered supplier to one or more UN agencies, and it must have a favourable track record with the UN.
- 2) It must not feature in any official listing of companies disqualified or banned by the UN.
- 3) It must represent 'value for money', i.e. offer prices for its services that are competitive with those charged by other comparable companies.

The logic of the reasoning outlined above rests on three other factors :

- a) If the best qualified consultant has a prior affiliation with a consulting company, the UN agency would have no right to 'demand a divorce', nor any interest in doing so.
- b) If a 'double' competitive process were to be undertaken, the UN might end up in an impossible dilemma, where the best-rated company does not offer the best-rated consultant, or where the best-rated candidate is not offered by the best-rated company.
- c) A Long-Term Agreement (LTA) is most useful for the supply in bulk of identical products such as vehicles, computers, vaccines, etc., but is much less relevant for the provision of 'services' (such as consultants), where the demand is hard to predict, where the needs of the UN are constantly changing, and where the 'supply' is often very different from case to case.

DUNDEX has already had LTAs with UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women, so there is no doubt that we meet the requirements. However, since they do not really offer any 'value added', and since an LTA approval and renewal process is labour-intensive both for UN agencies and for DUNDEX, we have by mutual agreement let them expire. Our experience since then confirms that **it is not only possible, but also unproblematic to have close and active cooperation with our UN partner agencies without an LTA.**