



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 29, 2013

Ms. Ana Vieira
Office of General Counsel
The University of Texas System
201 West Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2013-18835

Dear Ms. Vieira:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 504118 (OGC# 151390).

The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (the "university") received a request for the coefficients for two specified entities under the university's Job Order Contract program. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. You also state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of third parties. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified The Trevino Group, Inc. ("Trevino") and Williams & Thomas, LLP dba Jamail & Smith Construction of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have received comments from Trevino. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.104 of the Government Code protects from required public disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." Gov't Code § 552.104. The purpose of section 552.104 is to protect the interests of a governmental body in competitive bidding situations where the governmental body wishes to withhold information in order to obtain more favorable offers. *See* Open Records Decision No. 592

(1991). Section 552.104 protects information from disclosure if the governmental body demonstrates potential harm to its interests in a particular competitive situation. *See* Open Records Decision No. 463 (1987). Generally, section 552.104 does not except bids from disclosure after bidding is completed and the contract has been executed. *See* Open Records Decision No. 541 (1990). However, in some situations, section 552.104 will operate to protect from disclosure bid information that is submitted by successful bidders. *See id.* at 5 (recognizing limited situation in which statutory predecessor to section 552.104 continued to protect information submitted by successful bidder when disclosure would allow competitors to accurately estimate and undercut future bids).

You state the submitted information relates to existing contracts executed by the university. However, you explain a project for the same services has been posted for bid by the university. You state, while bidding has closed, the responses are currently being evaluated and no final agreements have been executed. You contend release of the submitted information would harm the university's ability to procure and negotiate a final contract related to the pending request for proposals. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the university may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104 of the Government Code, until such time as the contracts have been executed.¹

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



David L. Wheelus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DLW/akg

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address Trevino's argument against disclosure.

Ref: ID# 504118

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

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