



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 1, 2022

Ms. Countess Dudley
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne Avenue
Houston, Texas 77004

OR2022-33901

Dear Ms. Dudley:

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# 978083.

Texas Southern University (the "university") received a request for the winning proposal and awarded contract pertaining to a specified request for proposals. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. You also state you notified the Paciello Group of the request for information and of its 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 considered your claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

An interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) of the Government Code to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from the notified third party explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude the notified third party has a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information. *See, e.g., id.* § 552.110 (requiring the provision of specific factual evidence demonstrating the applicability of the exception). Accordingly, the university may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest the notified third party may have in the information.

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that a governmental body demonstrates, if released, would “harm its interests by providing an advantage to a competitor or bidder in a particular ongoing competitive situation or in a particular competitive situation where the governmental body establishes the situation at issue is set to reoccur or there is a specific and demonstrable intent to enter into the competitive situation again in the future.” *Id.* § 552.104(a). The “test under section 552.104 is whether knowing another bidder’s [or competitor’s information] would be an advantage, not whether it would be a decisive advantage.” *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831, 841 (Tex. 2015). After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find the university has failed to demonstrate the applicability of section 552.104 to the information at issue. Thus, we conclude the university may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.104(a). As no further exceptions to disclosure have been raised, the university must release the submitted information.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Erin Groff
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EMG/pt

Ref: ID# 978083

c: Requestor