ENHANCING SAFETY IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: A BID MANAGEMENT APPROACH

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Abstract. Safety in Facilities Management (FM) is a fundamental pillar that ensures the well-being of occupants and protects assets while maintaining operational efficiency. In the bid management process, embedding safety into FM contracts not only strengthens compliance but also adds value by fostering a safety-first culture. Bid management plays a crucial role in ensuring that safety is prioritized from the outset of FM contracts. This paper examines how to integrate safety requirements into bid proposals and offers best practices for ensuring safety in the FM bidding process. The findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating safety early in the FM bidding process to ensure regulatory compliance and enhance the reputation of FM service providers (FMSPs). By prioritizing safety at every stage of the bidding process, FMSPs can boost competitiveness, mitigate risks, and foster safer environments.

Keywords. Facilities Management, Safety, Bid Management, UAE

1. Introduction

Safety is a critical priority in facilities such as industrial plants, healthcare institutions, and large commercial properties, where even minor lapses can have significant consequences. Facilities Management (FM) encompasses a broad spectrum of activities that directly impact both occupants and building assets, making safety a fundamental pillar of effective FM operations (Pilbeam, 2024; Wetzel & Thabet, 2016). A comprehensive FM safety strategy not only minimizes workplace incidents, but also ensures regulatory compliance, enhances operational efficiency, and fosters a culture of safety and well-being within the built (Gustin, 2020 & Hinks & Puybaraud, 1999). Safety is an essential factor, requiring adherence to local regulations, as well as international standards, which set the framework for workplace safety and risk mitigation (Gallant, 2007; Wang et al., 2022).

Prioritizing safety in bid management ensures proper resource allocation for safety programs, personal protective equipment (PPE), and workforce training, leading to a safer FM contract. Furthermore, a strong commitment to safety contributes to higher workforce retention, as employees are more likely to remain with an organization that prioritizes their well-being. Safety is a competitive advantage in FM bids, as clients prefer FM Service Providers (FMSPs) with strong HSE records and certifications, showcasing professionalism and reliability (Dahanayake & Sumanarathna, 2022; Talamo & Atta, 2019).

Safety is recognized as a fundamental requirement of FM, particularly in ensuring occupant well-being and asset protection. Existing literature largely focuses on post-contract safety measures, with limited attention given to how safety is embedded at the pre-contractual stage—specifically during the formulation and evaluation of FM bids. A key area that is underexplored is the integration of safety during the bid management, which is crucial for defining operational standards and risk mitigation strategies in FM contracts (Dahanayake & Sumanarathna, 2022; Mawed, 2024). This study aims to address this research gap by exploring the potential for integrating safety into the bid management process. Bridging this gap is key to promoting safety-oriented bidding that boosts competitiveness and fosters a safety-first FM culture. This paper examines how safety is integrated into FM bidding, highlights the challenges into bids, and suggests best practices to incorporate safety in FM bids.

https://doi.org/10.31705/ICFMF2025.27

2. Methodology

The methodology is based on the authors' viewpoint derived from their industry experience in managing FM bids. This paper is in alignment with the methodological precedent set by Edwards and Holt (2010) and Sumanarathna et al. (2024), who employed expert-based authorial viewpoints to examine under-researched domains. While existing literature addresses FM safety standards and operational safety practices, the specific integration of safety considerations into the bid management process remains underexplored. The authors offer over 10 years of experience in FM and bid management, providing a practice-informed methodological approach in an under-researched area. Authors offer a localized perspective on the challenges and strategies for integrating safety into bid proposals, which are essential for successful contract execution. While this study adopts a practice-informed approach, the authors engaged in a systematic reflection process, drawing on multiple bid case examples across different FM contexts to ensure consistency and reduce anecdotal bias. Relevant academic literature is incorporated throughout the paper to contextualize, support, and critically reflect upon the authors' perspectives. The study is positioned as a preliminary investigation with the intension of conducting future research on incorporating safety within FM bid strategies.

3.Embedding Safety into Bid Management

In the UAE, safety in FM is not just a regulatory requirement but a vital component of project success. The FM sector plays a key role in upholding these safety standards. Embedding safety into the bidding process is essential to ensuring compliance with UAE laws and international best practices including UAE Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Occupational Safety and Health Abu Dhabi (OSHAD) regulations, and ISO 45001:2018, the global standard for occupational health and safety management. Non-compliance can result in significant penalties and damage to an FMSPs' reputation, making the incorporation of safety into the bidding process a non-negotiable aspect of FM contract management.

3.1 THE ROLE OF SAFETY IN THE FM BIDDING PROCESS

This section summarizes the role of safety in each stage of the bidding process.

3.1.1 Pre-qualification stage

In the UAE, the safety in FM bids is evident from the pre-qualification stage, where safety is often a primary evaluation criterion for clients. In many cases, it is mandatory for FM bidders to demonstrate of a robust safety management system that complies with local regulations, industry standards, and international frameworks—such as ISO 45001:2018 and OSHAD. Furthermore, clients frequently require FM bidders to have a proven track record of safety compliance, with no history of safety-related non-compliances or incidents. A strong safety record and compliance with industry standards are critical factors for advancing beyond this stage. Potential bidders are required to confirm the availability of relevant insurance coverage—such as Public Liability, Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability—during this stage to manage potential liabilities related to accidents or injuries that could arise during the contract execution.

3.1.2 Bidding stage

The bidding stage is an opportunity to set the tone for the safety culture within the facility. Bidders who prioritize safety in their proposals communicate their commitment to a safe work environment which can enhance their reputation and help build trust with the client. One of the most pressing reasons for emphasizing safety during the FM bidding stage is the potential for accidents, injuries, and hazards that may arise during the operation and maintenance of a facility. Proper safety protocols and planning during the bidding process help mitigate these risks,

reducing the likelihood of costly incidents. FMSPs should conduct thorough assessments of potential safety hazards specific to the facility in bid. Moreover, failure to adhere safety requirements—such as occupational safety laws, fire safety codes, building codes—during the bidding process can lead to non-compliance, resulting in fines, penalties, or even the revocation of operating licenses. Additionally, the bidders are typically required to submit detailed safety management plans, procedures, policies, and processes as part of the bids—such as. emergency procedures, risk assessments, employee training, and equipment safety standards— to ensure safety on the job site. Bidders are typically required to submit proof of relevant insurances as part of their bid.

3.1.3 Bid evaluation stage

In the evaluation stage of FM proposal, safety is a key factor that cannot be overlooked. By evaluating FMSPs' proposed safety plans, past performance, and overall safety culture, the clients make informed decisions that prioritize both worker well-being and facility operational stability. The commitment towards safety significantly enhances bidder's competitiveness, credibility and the overall win probability. Ultimately, the importance of safety in FM bid evaluation lies in its ability to secure the contract award while reducing long-term risks, ensure compliance, and create a safer, more efficient environment for all.

3.2. INTEGRATING SAFETY INTO BID PROPOSALS

The first step is to understand and incorporate safety requirements from the RFP, Law, industry standards, and ethical responsibilities. The RFP outlines client's safety, risk mitigation, and compliance expectations. Moreover, ensuring compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory standards—depending on the type of facility, its location, and the specific services being provided—is crucial in bid proposals. FMSPs should also incorporate industry best practices, even if not legally binding, to enhance credibility and safety. Ethical responsibility is equally important, ensuring a safe environment for workers, the public, and client assets beyond mere compliance. Safety is a fundamental responsibility that cannot be compromised.

Figure 1: Integrating Safety into Bid Proposals

A thorough understanding of the facility's unique risks is also crucial. FMSPs should conduct site visits and closely review the scope of work (SOW) along with Service Level Agreements (SLAs)/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). A detailed understanding of specific safety hazards enables FM bidders to propose targeted safety measures that will reduce hazards throughout the contract period.

The FM bid proposal should also consider a well-staffed, well-supervised team for creating a safety-conscious working environment. This includes ensuring that there are qualified staff who can safely perform the tasks, enough personnel to cover the specific needs of the facility and

the supervision to ensure that tasks are being completed safely and that workers are adhering to safety protocols. In addition, dedicated safety personnel may be required to ensure safety protocols across all tasks in compliance with regulatory safety standards, especially in larger or more complex facilities. In some cases, support from a FMSP's centralized safety team would be sufficient.

Safety is also about having the right tools and equipment for the job—for example, electrical work demands insulated tools and circuit testers, while high-level cleaning and hard-to-reach tasks require suitable scaffolding, ladders, and fall protection systems. The bid should not only estimate the tools and machinery required, but also account for how they will be maintained and tested to ensure they are safe to use. Bidders should also ensure that workers are equipped with appropriate PPE. The bid should account for these factors, also considering seasonal requirements and replenishments. No matter how well-equipped or well-staffed the project is, a safety plan will only be as effective as the training provided to personnel. Ensuring that safety trainings—such as IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health)/NEBOSH (National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health) for key personnel, fire warden training, task-specific training, and health and safety inductions—is included in the cost calculation avoids unexpected costs and allows transparency to the investment required to maintain a safe facility.

Technology-driven innovations are essential enabler of safety in FM in the UAE. Advanced solutions help mitigate risks, ensure compliance, and create safer environments. During bidding, integrating relevant key technologies—such as real-time monitoring, and smart safety devices—enhances protocols and reduces incidents. FMSPs should incorporate these innovations to strengthen safety and differentiate their bids.

Other key safety considerations such as site-specific safety plans, risk mitigation, monitoring, reporting, auditing, continuous improvement, staff well-being, FMSP safety culture, subcontractor safety management should also be integrated into the bid proposal.

4. Integrating Safety in FM Bids: Challenges and Best Practices

The key challenges in integrating safety into FM bids, and corresponding mitigation strategies, are presented in Table 1. These are drawn from the authors' extensive professional experience, developed over a decade of reviewing RFPs and preparing bid proposals across diverse sectors in the UAE FM market.

Table 1: Challenges and Best Practices

No	Challenge	Mitigation Strategies/Best Practices
1	*Budget Constraints: Balancing safety investment vs. competitive pricing*	
1.1	Integrating safety, particularly in complex FM bids, requires significant financial investment for resources, training, compliance and ongoing safety management. In competitive bidding, FMSPs may feel pressured to lower costs, potentially compromising safety by cutting corners on experienced staff, staff training etc. Some bidders may exclude safety-related costs to seem more competitive, but encounter safety risks, reputational damage, and financial fallouts in the long run.	FMSPs should educate clients on the long-term benefits of prioritizing safety over short-term cost savings by highlighting the potential financial and reputational risks of accidents to justify the initial investment in safety measures. Safety should be positioned as a key differentiator in the bid proposal, which can enhance client trust, strengthen reputation, and improve win probability.
1.2	The rapid advancement of safety technologies—such as IoT sensors, drones, robots—can provide significant advantages in managing safety risks. While these technologies can improve safety monitoring, incident reporting, and predictive maintenance, the initial implementation costs can be	Including a detailed breakdown of technological costs within the bid proposal, along with anticipated savings from improved safety and risk mitigation, can help justify the expenditure.

	high. FMSPs may find it challenging to integrate these within their bids, especially if clients are not yet familiar with or do not value innovations.	Including successful case studies can help build trust with clients and prove the return on investment in safety innovation.
2	*Absence of a comprehensive risk analysis*	
2.1	A lack of thorough risk evaluation in FM bids due to the below can lead to underestimating or overlooking potential risks, which, in turn, can impact the project's safety, financial stability, and long-term success. • Inadequate Risk Analysis – Operational, financial, compliance, environmental, market/external risks may be overlooked or insufficiently assessed. • Limited Data Access –Lack of critical data can hinder a thorough risk assessment. • Unrealistic Bid Timelines – Tight deadlines may force bidders to prioritize speed over comprehensive risk evaluation.	Adopt a structured risk management approach during the bid stage through; • Site Visits & Safety Audits to collect critical data. • Engage SMEs – Consult safety and operations experts. • Collaborate with Clients – Foster transparent and timely data sharing. • Leverage Past Data to identify and mitigate common risks. • Advocate Realistic Timelines to allow a thorough risk analysis. • Extend risk evaluation to subcontractors. • Early Client Engagement to discuss risks upfront to tailor the risk mitigation strategy. • Submit a detailed risk register and a contingency plan.
3	*Lack of Specific Safety Metrics in RFPs*	
3.1	Some RFPs lack well-defined safety SLAs/KPIs, resulting in varied interpretations by bidders and inconsistent safety standards across proposals. This inconsistency makes it difficult for clients to compare safety performance and select the most qualified FMSPs.	• Define safety metrics in RFP – Include measurable KPIs, compliance requirements, and mandatory training expectations. If the RFP lacks safety SLAs/KPIs, bidders should propose their own safety metrics. • Bidders should showcase safety systems, past performance, and strategies to exceed standards.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This study underscores the importance of integrating safety requirements early in the FM bidding process, as it not only ensures regulatory compliance but also enhances the reputation of FMSPs for delivering secure, high-quality services. By prioritizing safety at every stage, from pre-qualification to bid evaluation, FMSPs can boost competitiveness, reduce risks, and contribute to safer and efficient built environments. Addressing challenges like balancing safety with cost, limited risk analysis, and unclear safety metrics can be achieved by raising awareness of the long-term benefits of safety, adopting structured risk management, and advocating for clear safety metrics. This approach leads to long-term sustainable safety standards for both clients and FMSPs.

This study carries several practical and theoretical implications for the FM sector, particularly in the context of bid management as follows.

- *For FMSPs:* Actionable insights into how safety requirements can be systematically integrated into bid proposals.

- *For Clients:* Valuable insights to enhance procurement specifications, ensuring that safety is considered from the FMSP selection through to service delivery.
- *For the Academic and Research Community:* Needs for future studies to validate and expand upon the findings through structured methodologies.

6. Limitations and Future Work

While this study offers practical insights derived from industry experience, its reliance on expert opinion introduces potential subjectivity. The inherent subjectivity associated with expert-based methodologies is acknowledged. Empirical validation through structured case studies in real-world FM contracts is required to assess the applicability and effectiveness of the findings across diverse organizational settings. The findings of this study are indicative and preliminary; therefore, future studies employing empirical methods—such as surveys, interviews, and case study comparisons—will be conducted to validate these initial insights.

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