

As soon as Boeing decided to bid on the U.S. Air Force KC-46 tanker contract, the deadline started for a complete proposal package and the Shared Services Group's Creative Services team went to work.

When the Air Force awarded a development contract in February for 179 next-generation aerial refueling tanker aircraft worth upward of \$30 billion, it represented a major win for Boeing that included more than a year's worth of hard, behind-the-scenes work by Creative Services' Enterprise Proposals Services.

The team was instrumental in putting together the 8,000-page tanker bid that described every aspect of the product and the program. The paperwork eventually filled 32 cardboard boxes.

customers," Nicks said, adding that her satisfaction comes from "knowing you're bringing a lot of opportunities to Boeing and that all your hard work paid off, and it's done and it's out the door."

For the tanker proposal, Nicks said, team members waited for the official Request for Proposal, or RFP, to arrive from the customer. As soon as it did, the team swung into action. They set up servers and provided training for the subject-matter expert authors, led by "book captains." These people, nicknamed "book bosses," worked on specific sections of the proposal. A multi-user Web-based publishing tool, electronic Desktop Proposal System, managed the growing document as it was created.

Making changes is a huge part of

"We were constantly going in and reformatting," Nicks said.

The last big push was printing and binding—seven copies of five separate volumes, with each copy requiring 27 three-ring binders.

Finally, on July 9, 2010, Boeing hand-delivered the proposal for the KC-X tanker competition to the U.S. Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. But the Proposals team wasn't finished.

After the proposal was submitted, the Air Force customer sent in hundreds of requests for additional information, called Evaluation Notices. Nicks said her team worked on these "nonstop" throughout the summer and fall.

"We were doing crazy-fast turnarounds,"

The Proposal

How Boeing won the \$30 billion tanker competition in 8,000 pages—and many weekends of work

By Kathrine Beck

Delivering a \$30 billion winning proposal is all part of the job for Enterprise Proposals Services. In 2010, the team produced 356 other proposals.

"Our folks are frequently asked to work weekends and after hours at a moment's notice," said Roy Okamoto, manager of Enterprise Proposals Services. "They travel a lot. Any personal plans get thrown out the door. These people make so many personal sacrifices. I don't really think that gets recognized."

Kelly Nicks worked most holidays in 2010. But it was worth it, according to the St. Louis proposal coordinator.

"I really like being super busy, and I really like the interaction with our

the process, Nicks said.

"We had over 1,345 graphics and there can be 25 changes on just one graphic," Nicks said. Creative Services graphic designers in St. Louis and at other Boeing sites created the charts and technical drawings.

Some changes came from three team reviews, designated pink, red and gold. The teams attached comments to the document to be addressed by authors. Throughout the process, Creative Services editors in Puget Sound and Electronic Publishing employees in St. Louis pored over every page, correcting grammar, spelling out acronyms and ensuring that formatting and templates were correct.

she recalled. Then came a proposal update, or Final Proposal Revision, which was submitted in February.

Mike Scholes, KC-X Capture Team leader, said Creative Services was a "critical resource" that helped Boeing win the tanker competition.

"I can't tell you how important that was," he said, "and to know our team had that kind of talent and experience leading our proposal development." ■

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: (Top) Boeing team reviews of the KC-X tanker proposal were designated pink, red and gold. **CASS WEAVER/BOEING; BINDER PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK. PHOTOS: (Above, from left)** Boeing St. Louis employees Dave Dolson (from left), Randy Roberds, Mike Scholes and Kelly Nicks box up the finished 8,000-page KC-X tanker proposal in July 2010. **RICH RAU/BOEING**

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— Kelly Nicks, St. Louis proposal coordinator