

JUSTIFICATION AND APPROVAL  
FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Office of Acquisition Operations  
Technology Acquisition Center  
260 Industrial Way West  
Eatontown, NJ 07724
  
2. Description of the Action: This proposed action is for a firm fixed-price (FFP) Delivery Order (DO) issued under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) IV Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Information Technology (OIT) Bidirectional Health Information Exchange (BHIE) program requires a one-year renewal of F5 Networks brand name Big-IP LTM 6900 Local Traffic Manager (LTM) software maintenance and support. The period of performance shall be 12 months from Delivery Order Award followed by two 12-month option periods.
  
3. Description of Supplies or Services: The required Big IP LTM 6900 hardware and software maintenance and support shall fully ensure that the existing BHIE owned and operated F5 load balancing system continues to receive the necessary updates, supplementary manufacturer support, and maintenance. The F5 load balancing system is an integral part of the BHIE systems success in functionality and seamless operations for our customers. The Big-IP LTM 6900 Local Traffic Manager is an application delivery networking system that provides an adaptable solution to secure, optimize, and deliver applications, including application intelligence and control. The Big-IP LTM 6900 delivers high application fluency enabling network-speed full payload inspection and programmable event-based traffic management. The total estimated value of the proposed effort inclusive of the option periods is [REDACTED].
  
4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting an exception to fair opportunity is Section 41 U.S.C. 4106(c) as implemented by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 16.505(b)(2)(i)(B) as modified by FAR 16.505(a)(4)(ii). An exception to fair opportunity is allowed where only one manufacturer is capable of providing the supplies or services required at the level of quality required because the supplies or services ordered are unique or highly specialized.
  
5. Rationale Supporting Use of Authority Cited Above: Based on market research, as described in paragraph eight of this document, it was determined that limited competition is viable among authorized resellers of this brand item. This is a brand name justification in accordance with FAR 11.105, Items Peculiar to One Manufacturer. F5 Networks is the only source that can provide the aforementioned software maintenance support. The Government does not possess the proprietary data for the Big IP LTM 6900 software.

## TAC-14-08011 F5 Big-IP Support & Maintenance

Without this data, no other source has the ability to provide the required maintenance support. Failure to acquire the aforementioned maintenance support would prevent the proper updates to software and firmware. Acquiring this maintenance support will ensure the F5 Networks' Big IP system is maintained at full capacity to manage traffic of data between VA, Department of Defense, as well as other external consumers and producers.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in the market research section of this document. Although the Government is limiting competition by specifying a unique brand name, there are authorized resellers of these products under the NASA SEWP IV GWAC. All SEWP IV orders are placed under existing indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contracts, and thus are not required to be synopsized pursuant to FAR subpart 16.505(a)(1).
7. Actions to Increase Competition: The Government will continue to conduct market research to ascertain if there are changes in the market place that would enable future actions to be competed.
8. Market Research: OIT Service Delivery and Engineering (SDE) BHIE team routinely conducts market research for compatibility and interoperability of products as it relates to the BHIE middleware functionality. Market research was performed by OIT BHIE in February 2013, and July 2013, to identify any alternative sources for the required F5 Networks brand name Big-IP LTM 6900 maintenance and support. Systems load balancing products offered by the following vendors were reviewed by BHIE technical experts: F5 Networks, Barracuda, Citrix, River Bed, and A10 Networks. The technical team determined through interoperability studies on the aforementioned brands of systems, applications, cards, and chassis that software for each brand is vendor-specific and not interchangeable. Only F5 Networks certified brand name software maintenance and support sustainment services will meet the technical requirements to maintain these systems. Based on the above market research, it is determined only F5 Networks and its authorized resellers can provide Big-IP LTM 6900 maintenance.

Additionally, utilizing the NASA SEWP IV GWAC Manufacturer Lookup tool, 34 current NASA SEWP contractors were identified as possible resellers for F5 Networks' brand products.

9. Other Facts:  
None