

JUSTIFICATION
FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Acquisition and Logistics
Technology Acquisition Center
23 Christopher Way
Eatontown, NJ 07724
2. Description of Action: The proposed action is for a firm fixed-price Delivery Order (DO) issued under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) IV Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) for International Business Machine (IBM) brand name enterprise hardware and software for an upgrade and expansion of the existing environment at the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) Exchange site.
3. Description of Supplies or Services: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Information & Technology (OI&T) requires IBM brand name hardware, specifically servers, tape libraries, tape expansion units, disk shelves, Controllers, to upgrade the existing IBM Exchange environment. An Exchange environment is multiple connected hardware and software entities that provide a user the capability to send and receive email messages. VA requires IBM Hardware and IBM Storage to tie into the VA's current Exchange infrastructure. Currently, there are existing IBM storage controllers, IBM Disk Shelves, and IBM Servers at the VBA location. In addition, VA requires storage expansion upgrade of the existing IBM Exchange environment, warranty of all equipment, and software that is ancillary to run the IBM Exchange Environment. This procurement will also include a five (5) year extended hardware and software warranty. Delivery and installation must be completed not later than 30 days after DO award.
4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting an exception to fair opportunity is 41 U.S.C. 4106(c)(2) as implemented by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 16.505(b)(2)(i)(B) entitled, "Only one awardee 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: This is a brand name justification in support of FAR 11.105, Items Peculiar to One Manufacturer. Based on the market research described in paragraph eight of this document, it was determined that limited competition is available among authorized resellers for the required IBM hardware, software, and warranty. OI&T has an existing support infrastructure for the current Exchange environment which will be augmented through the instant requirement with additional hardware and software. In order to ensure seamless integration of the additional hardware and software to the existing environment, these items must be compatible with the existing management tools. These management tools include IBM storage manager which manages all the current storage environments nationwide, IBM director which manages all the servers and fiber switches nationwide and the IBM Tivoli

VBA Exchange Augmentation

Storage Manager (TSM) backup environment which provides backup for these tools. These management tools are not compatible with and will not support any other brand of hardware and software. Therefore, no other brand of hardware and software could be managed by the current OI&T infrastructure.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in the market research section of this document. In accordance with FAR 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2) the contract award will be synopsisized on the Federal Business Opportunities Page. In addition, this Justification and Approval will be made publicly available on the FedBizOps Page and posted on the NASA SEWP IV website with the solicitation.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: Although the Government is limiting competition as a result of specifying a brand name, there are authorized resellers of these products on the NASA SEWP IV contract. Competition for this requirement among these resellers is anticipated. Furthermore, in order to remove or overcome barriers to competition in future acquisitions for this requirement, the Government's technical experts will continue to perform market research to determine if there are any other brands of support that will enable future requirements to be competed.

8. Market Research: Market research was conducted through Internet searches which identified Hewlett Packard, EMC, IBM, Dell, NetApp, and Nimble Storage as storage device manufacturers. The Government's technical experts contacted these manufacturers in June 2014 to determine if any devices could be used within the VA IBM storage environment. Each manufacturer, including IBM, confirmed that all equipment, software, and components within an enterprise storage solution, similar to VA Exchange environments, must be of the same manufacturer in order to ensure interoperability and compatibility. In addition, none of the manufacturers could provide a warranty for a system that contained equipment, software, or components manufactured by another company. In addition, a review of vendors offering IBM equipment via SEWP's Manufacturer Look-up tool yielded eight resellers of IBM equipment. Based on the above information, limited competition is anticipated.

9. Other Facts: None.