

JUSTIFICATION  
FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Office of Acquisition Operations  
Technology Acquisition Center  
23 Christopher Way  
Eatontown NJ 07724
2. Description of Action: The proposed action is for a firm-fixed price delivery order to be issued under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Government Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) for brand name Cisco Systems (Cisco) Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephones, associated telephony system components, software licenses, installation services, training, and hardware and software maintenance and technical support.
3. Description of the Supplies and Services: VA, Office of Information and Technology, Service Delivery and Engineering, Enterprise Operations (EO) has a requirement to acquire brand name Cisco VoIP telephones, associated telephony system components, software licenses, installation services, training, and hardware and software maintenance and technical support, composing a VoIP system solution for two facilities under VA's Austin Information Technology Center (AIRC). This VoIP system solution will integrate AIRC's headquarters and its South Park office in Austin, Texas with its affiliated Hines Information Technology Center (HITC) VoIP infrastructure in Hines, Illinois. HITC's current VoIP telephony system and infrastructure consists solely of brand name Cisco VoIP telephony system components and software licenses. Integration of the AIRC headquarters and its South Park VoIP infrastructure with HITC's Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) Cisco telephony system will require 1200 Cisco VoIP telephones, associated Cisco telephony software licenses, associated Cisco telephony components, and installation services to provide for a Cisco Unified Communication System Solution (UCS) VoIP Telephone System, Internet Protocol (IP) Voicemail System, Enhanced 911 Notification System, and Call Detail Recording reporting package. The installation services shall include design, project management, installation of all hardware, configuration of all software, testing, certification, staging, and deployment of telephones, help desk support, an on-site telecommunication technician, and remote technical telephone support. In addition, the Contractor shall provide hardware and software maintenance; technical support; and move, add, and change (MAC) services for the installed VoIP system at AIRC and South Park. The hardware and software maintenance shall consist of minor updates, patches, fixes, updates, MAC's, and security resolutions. Technical support shall be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via toll free telephone number and/or email for users to contact for emergency and routine service calls. This support shall provide for the analysis, troubleshooting, and resolution of any other VoIP product-related problems or questions encountered by Government users with the specified VoIP products. Training shall consist of hands-on demonstrations of the use of the telephones, a walkthrough of each phone menu selection, and a detailed explanation of the use of the voice-mail

operation for up to 2000 users in a class-room setting. The base period of performance shall include delivery and installation of all equipment within 120 days of delivery order award, 8-months of hardware and software maintenance and technical support, and two 12-month option periods for hardware and software maintenance and technical support. The total estimated price of the proposed action is REDACTED, including all options.

4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting this exception to fair opportunity is 41 U.S.C. 4106(c)(2) as implemented by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 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. Use of Authority Cited: Based on market research, as described in section 8 of this justification, it was determined that limited competition is available among authorized resellers for the required brand name Cisco items and services. Only Cisco products are capable of meeting the Government's requirement as no other brand provides VoIP telephony system products that are interoperable and compatible with HITC's current Cisco telecommunications infrastructure. The AITC and South Park VoIP telephony system must be completely interoperable and compatible with HITC's existing Cisco VoIP telephony system. VA's existing VoIP infrastructure in HITC consists solely of Cisco servers, routers, switches, telephones, and other various voice infrastructure components. Networking the HITC, AITC, and South Park VoIP telephony systems together will allow VA to have a single administration interface and configuration of database replication and alternate call routing. In the event of a single-site system failure, operations can continue at that site by rerouting call traffic to one of the two remaining interoperable and compatible Cisco VoIP network sites. The affected site's telephone devices will have the capabilities to re-register through the network to one of the two other VoIP systems and continue to seamlessly operate. Once the affected individual site's technical issue has been resolved, the systems' telephone device registration will automatically revert back to the original site's system. This operation shall be transparent to the user and will not impact calls in progress. VA can only acquire this necessary capability by networking its telephony systems to others that are interoperable and compatible with each other. The present HITC brand name Cisco voice gateways are installed and operational. Any other brand telephony system with equipment other than Cisco will result in interoperability, compatibility, and performance degradation issues. Specifically, the existing HITC Cisco infrastructure uses Hot Standby Router Protocol (HSRP), which is a Cisco proprietary redundancy protocol for establishing a fault tolerant default gateway, and which is used to forward voice and data packets to another operational network if the primary gateway should become inaccessible. HSRP requires two Cisco routers to transfer information and it is not compatible with non-Cisco hardware. Additionally, the infrastructure devices for the telephony system are required to run Cisco's proprietary Internal Operating System software in order to achieve interoperability with the existing network infrastructure products and software. The use of non-Cisco hardware, software, and telephones in VA's network will result in data transmission delays between devices due to the differing protocols, which would result in voice and data loss. Cisco telephony equipment and

associated software is the only VoIP and voice routing infrastructure that will provide uninterrupted access, complete interoperability, and scalability with the existing deployed HITC telecommunications platform. Failure to procure this new telephony system would impact Veterans and their family members in making medical appointments or health inquiries and prevent hospital staff from accomplishing the services required if its telephony system failed and it could not network into another site's system. The native format and syntax of Cisco communication protocols must be used to communicate with other Cisco telephony system products. The proposed Cisco UCS telephony system solution will provide for redundancy, facilitate failover support, maximize uptime, support database replication, and allow for alternate call routing in the event of a single-site system failure by rerouting call traffic to the other telephony system sites. AITC and South Park's telephony system must be interoperable and compatible with HITC's telephony system and due to proprietary constraints, only brand name Cisco VoIP telephones, associated telephony system components, and software licenses can meet the Government's requirements.

In addition, the installation services, training, and hardware and software maintenance and technical support requirements can only be provided by Cisco, or an authorized reseller, as the telephony system hardware and software components are proprietary to Cisco. Specifically, without access to Cisco's proprietary source code, no other source is able to provide minor updates, patches, fixes, updates, or security resolutions. The training materials are comprised of proprietary data, specifically the interworkings of the training are such that a non-reseller could not provide them. Without the required hardware and software maintenance and technical support, the Cisco telephony system performance would eventually degrade and would not be usable by VA as its VoIP telephony system solution. In addition, VA would not receive security updates, which could compromise VA's entire network security posture. Additionally, since the VoIP equipment is proprietary, no third party source exists that provides analysis, troubleshooting, and resolution of any VoIP product-related problems other than Cisco or its authorized resellers.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Currently, no other OEM can provide products that are interoperable and compatible to integrate with HITC's present Cisco brand name telephony system infrastructure. It was determined that limited competition is anticipated among authorized resellers of Cisco VoIP telephones, associated telephony system components, software licenses, installation services, training, and hardware and software maintenance and technical support that are current NASA SEWP V GWAC holders. In accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(D), the award notice for this action will be synopsisized and this justification made publically available on the Federal Business Opportunities page within 14 days after award. Additionally, this justification shall be posted with the solicitation on the NASA SEWP V GWAC website to notify prospective offerors.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: The Government will continue to review and revalidate its requirements as VoIP solutions continue to evolve. The requiring activity will continue to research and monitor whether there are emerging products that enter

the marketplace that are interoperable and compatible with HITC's existing Cisco VoIP telephony system and will monitor other new VoIP telephony system product offerings to determine if an entirely new solution could meet VA's future requirements cost effectively through competition.

8. Market Research: The Government's technical team conducted market research by reviewing other similar telephony product solutions currently available in the commercial marketplace. This market research is an ongoing process that started in 2015 and is continuously being conducted, as recently as June 2016. The Government's technical team determined that brand name Cisco telephony system products are the only products available that will accept the infrastructure code in the native format and syntax with the HITC's existing VoIP infrastructure architecture to ensure redundancy, facilitate failover support, maximize uptime, support database replication, and allow for alternate call routing in the event of a single-site system failure by rerouting call traffic to the other telephony system sites. Specifically, Avaya, Inc. and NEC Corporation of America were reviewed to determine if their OEM products could meet VA's functional requirements, including hardware and software. Based on a review of these vendors' products, the technical team determined that these alternative hardware and software products cannot communicate with HITC's existing default tolerant gateway because the associated protocols are not interoperable or compatible with HITC's existing network infrastructure. In addition, no other OEM products can offer a single administration platform to remotely administer the currently installed Cisco telephony network infrastructure. VA networking Subject Matter Experts regularly review industry trade publications and conduct internet research to ascertain if any other VoIP solutions are available which could be interoperable and compatible with HITC's existing Cisco network infrastructure. Based on the market research, the technical experts concluded that brand name Cisco hardware and software telephony products are the only available products and services compatible with HITC's current infrastructure.

Additional market research was conducted in July 2016 by utilizing the NASA SEWP V Market Research Tool. It was determined that there are numerous NASA SEWP V GWAC holders that are authorized resellers that can provide the required Cisco VoIP telephones, associated telephony system components, and software licenses under North American Industry Classification System code 541519. Therefore, limited competition is anticipated for the requirements described herein.

9. Other Facts: None