

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, and software licenses.
3. Description of the Supplies and Services: VA, Office of Information and Technology, Service Delivery and Engineering, Field Operations, has a requirement for brand name Cisco VoIP telephones, telephony system components and software licenses for Telephony Critical Sustainment Region 1 Infrastructure at the following VA Healthcare System sites: Amarillo, TX; Boise, ID; Greater Los Angeles, CA; and the Regional Service Center in Denver, CO. This effort will provide required telephones, telephony system components and redundancy for current VoIP telephony systems at VA Healthcare System sites within Region 1 which consist solely of brand name Cisco VoIP telephony system components and software licenses. The effort includes 974 telephones, models 6901, 8831 and 8841 to convert legacy phones to VoIP within the existing Cisco Infrastructure. The required brand name Cisco VoIP telephony system components and software licenses include: voice modules for 28 Public Switched Telephone Network Gateways; 21 Power over Ethernet (POE) switches; four (4) Cisco High Availability (HA) licenses; and 40 Cisco Media Sense licenses. These components and licenses will help VA optimize care, increase productivity, enhance sustainability, and improve disaster resistance by providing the following functions. The voice modules required will allow the 28 existing Cisco routers to deliver voice services by providing the necessary voice components. The routers at 28 sites will not be able to provide continuing telephony services required by the VA healthcare systems without these voice modules. The switches will provide power to existing VoIP telephones. Cisco Media Sense licenses provide a means for operators and police to record telephone conversations, while Cisco HA licenses provide needed redundancy for the Call Centers. All VoIP telephony system components and software licenses shall be delivered within 30 days of delivery order award. Warranty and maintenance shall be covered under the existing National Enterprise Service Agreement.
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. Rationale Supporting 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 these Cisco items. Cisco is the OEM for the required VoIP telephones, associated telephony system components, and software licenses. The existing Region 1 infrastructure is comprised of only Cisco brand name router/switch technology. There are currently hundreds of Cisco servers, routers, switches, and other voice infrastructure components in use at the Region 1 data centers as well as each Healthcare System that Region 1 supports. Only Cisco telephony system components are compatible and interoperable with the current infrastructure due to their proprietary code. As such, use of any other equipment other than Cisco will result in interoperability and compatibility issues. Specifically, the Cisco infrastructure uses Hot Standby Router Protocol (HSRP), which is a proprietary redundancy protocol for establishing a fault tolerant default gateway, and which is used if the primary gateway should become inaccessible. HSRP requires two Cisco routers to transfer information and it is not compatible with other hardware or software. Utilizing any other brand name item in this infrastructure will result in those products not communicating with the existing items. Additionally, infrastructure devices are required to run Cisco's proprietary Internal Operating System (IOS) software in order to achieve complete interoperability with the existing network infrastructure including the Cisco Unified Communications Manager, Version 9.1.2; Cisco Unity Connections 10.5; and Cisco Unified CCX, Version 10.6. Only Cisco or an authorized reseller has access to the proprietary HSRP and IOS software required to achieve interoperability and compatibility with existing telephony components. Furthermore, replacing the existing Cisco infrastructure with a competitor's telephony system and software would result in a duplication of cost and man hours already expended on the existing VoIP solution which would not be recouped through competition of this effort. In addition, the use of non-Cisco hardware and software in VA's network will result in data transmission delays between devices due to the differing protocols, which could result in data loss. Cisco equipment is the only VoIP and voice routing infrastructure that will provide uninterrupted access, interoperability, and ease of scalability with the existing deployed platform. VA cannot jeopardize on-line collaboration or the integrity and speed of its Local Area Network/Wide Area Network data packet transmissions by purchasing incompatible equipment and software.
6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in the market research section of this document. This effort did not yield any additional sources that can meet the Government's requirement. It was determined however that limited competition is viable among authorized resellers of Cisco products and services. In accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations 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 interested parties.

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 Region 1's existing Cisco VoIP telephony system.
8. Market Research: The Government's technical team conducted market research by reviewing other similar products from competitors. This market research is an ongoing process starting in 2012 and continuously being conducted, as recently as April 2016. The Government's technical team determined that Cisco OEM telephony system products are the only products available that will accept the infrastructure code in the native format and syntax without modification to the existing VA VoIP infrastructure architecture. Specifically, in April 2016, the Government's technical team conducted an internet search of similar hardware and software telephony products to determine if any other OEM products could meet VA's functionality requirements, including industry hardware, software, and associated warranty/maintenance solutions by Black Box Corporation and Brocade Communications Systems. Based on a review of these products, the technical team determined that the alternative hardware products would not communicate with VA's existing default tolerant gateway because the competing protocols are not interoperable or compatible with VA's existing 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. Based on the market research, the technical experts concluded that Cisco hardware and software products and associated warranty/maintenance are the only commercially available products compatible with VA's current infrastructure.
9. Other facts: Not Applicable.