

JUSTIFICATION  
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 Action: The proposed action is for a firm-fixed price (FFP) delivery order issued under a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) for the procurement of Tegile storage arrays, expansion shelves, installation services and standard warranty to support the iKnow application in the Veterans Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI) environment.
3. Description of the Supplies or Services: The VA, Office of Information and Technology has a requirement for one Tegile T4200 hybrid (flash/solid state drive (SSD) and hard disk drive (HDD)) storage array (including expansion shelves, installation, and warranty support) with an option for up to four Tegile T4700 all-flash storage arrays. These storage arrays will be installed at the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) and will be used by VINCI specifically to support every day operations of the iKnow application. iKnow is a web-based application that pulls Text Integration Utilities (TIU) notes on demand from the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) and indexes them per patient to build a searchable collection of clinical notes. When iKnow is released to production, it must support simultaneous use by clinicians at all 130 VA medical centers nationwide. The proposed backend architecture features a dedicated TIU database server attached to Tegile storage arrays which have dedicated network connections to the iKnow servers. This underlying hardware must support the massive amounts of data which will be transferred between these two layers. iKnow will process data from 9 million patients as well as the historical data from 17 million historical patient records. The storage equipment must be capable of working in concert with processors to allow queries and calculations to be completed without excessive wait times. Tegile storage arrays leverage the performance of flash, the density of hard disks and the features of the IntelliFlash operating system to deliver a resilient storage platform that meets these requirements. This effort will include professional onsite installation of the Tegile hardware and software. Additionally, the Contractor shall provide a 5-year hardware warranty which includes standard eight hours per day by five days per week telephone and email support, next business day hardware replacement for defective parts, and required software updates. VA requires a five-year warranty since it anticipates using these storage arrays for a minimum of five years. The required Tegile products shall be delivered within 45 days after receipt of order.
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), 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: Based on market research, as described in section 8 of this justification, it was determined that limited competition is available for the required brand name Tegile storage arrays, expansion shelves, installation and warranty support among NASA SEWP V GWAC value added resellers. The procured storage arrays must provide the performance and capacity necessary to support an enterprise-level application such as iKnow; be fully redundant with active/active controllers; support Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 140-2 data encryption (necessary since the iKnow application indexes protected data); and support specific versions of multiple network protocols without additional add-ons.

Only Tegile storage arrays can meet all of VA's requirements. Specifically, VA requires a storage array that is interoperable and compatible with the currently fielded network technologies in place in the VINCI Environment. Specifically, the currently fielded network technologies include Network File System version 4.0 (NFSv4), Common Internet File System (CIFS); Server Message Block version 3.0 (SMB3); Internet Small Computer Systems Interface (iSCSI); and Fibre Channel (FC). These technologies are primarily used to connect computer data storage to servers. No other brand name storage array can communicate and signal to these fielded technologies.

If the required Tegile storage arrays are not procured, the VINCI environment cannot support the enterprise-level operation of the iKnow application. iKnow will support provider decision-making for improved patient care by providing a user-friendly “Google-like” search capability for all clinical notes for a particular patient. It is critical that the Tegile equipment contract be procured to support completion of the required queries and calculations without excessive wait times. Failure to procure the new Tegile equipment contract will jeopardize the release to production of the iKnow application.

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 requirements. It was determined however that limited competition is viable among authorized resellers for this brand name item. In accordance with FAR 16.505(a)(4)(iii)(A)(2), this justification will be provided with the solicitation to all appropriate NASA SEWP V GWAC holders. This action will be synopsisized at award on the Federal Business Opportunities Page and the justification will be made publicly available.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: In order to remove or overcome barriers to competition in future acquisitions for this requirement, 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: Market research was conducted in March 2017 by the Government's technical experts who researched internet sites for information about storage solutions suitable to support the operation of the iKnow application. Other

brand name storage arrays including Panasas, Nimble Storage, HPE/3PAR, and NetApp were researched. The results of the market research confirmed that only Tegile or an authorized reseller has the capability of providing storage arrays that are interoperable and compatible with all the currently fielded network technologies in place in the VINCI environment (NFSv4, CIFS, SMB3, iSCSI, and FC). Panasas and Nimble Storage's solutions do not support SMB3 or SNFv4. HPE/3PAR's available storage solutions are more suited for FC storage only and do not adequately support NFSv4, CIFS, SMB3, and iSCSI. NetApp's available storage solutions do not support SMB3 adequately. This research confirmed that the competing products lack one or more of the requirements discussed in Section 5 above and necessary to support operation of the iKnow application.

Additional market research was conducted in May 2017 by the Contract Specialist by utilizing the Provider Lookup tool on the NASA SEWP V GWAC website which identified 14 resellers of the required Tegile storage array's including five prospective Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) GWAC holders. Therefore, limited competition is anticipated on NASA SEWP V among authorized resellers of the required brand name hardware and maintenance support.

9. Other Facts: None.