

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 warranty to support research studies 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 additional Tegile T4200 hybrid storage arrays. These storage arrays will be installed at the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) and will be used by VINCI specifically to expand the storage capacity of the VINCI research computing environment to allow researchers to use various applications including Linux Statistics Analysis System (SAS) Grid, Windows Structured Query Language database (SQL DB), and Windows Hyper-V environments, as well as crossover to VINCI's Windows SQL DB, and Hyper-V for both existing research studies and new studies, which are being added at the rate of approximately 40-50 per month. The required Tegile hybrid storage will allow VINCI to continue enhancing its computing and storage environment to support existing research and meet growing demand for new research studies and to continue providing support for VA's business function applications. 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. The total estimated price of the proposed action, including the optional task.
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 purpose of this acquisition is to enhance the existing VINCI environment with additional storage capacity. The procured storage arrays must provide the performance and capacity necessary to support a research environment with more than 2.5 petabytes of data; be fully redundant with active/active controllers; support Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 140-2 data encryption (necessary since VINCI research studies work with protected data); and support specific versions of multiple network technologies without additional add-ons.

Only Tegile storage arrays can meet all of VA's requirements, and the required expansion shelves include network technologies and electrical interconnects which are proprietary to Tegile. No other brand name expansion shelf will work with the Tegile storage array. 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 used primarily to connect computer data storage to servers. No other brand name storage array can communicate and signal to all these fielded technologies. Any other brand name storage array that does not have these functions would require complete rebuilding and redesign to communicate and signal using all of these fielded technologies. Also no other expansion shelf can meet VA's form, fit and function requirements to allow the Tegile storage array to operate. In addition any source would need access to Tegile proprietary data in order to provide the installation and warranty services since access to that code is needed to ensure all the services provided are properly configured and access to the storage arrays proprietary elements is allowed.

If the required Tegile storage arrays are not procured, the existing VINCI environment cannot be expanded. As a result, VINCI would not be able to continue to support both existing research studies as well as requests for new research studies for which data would be stored in the Tegile environment. Since these research studies are designed to investigate ways to improve patient care, an inability to support new studies would thwart these efforts. Furthermore, VA relies heavily on stored data for analysis of network performance of numerous production systems. Not procuring the required Tegile arrays to expand VINCI's storage capacity would limit this integral function. As the systems grow, the amount of stored data used to analyze the network performance of VINCI's production systems also increases. This increasing volume of stored data requires additional storage capacity.

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: The Government will continue to conduct market research to ascertain if there are changes in the marketplace that would enable future actions to be competed.

8. Market Research: Market research was conducted in February 2017 by the Government's technical experts, who researched internet sites for information about storage solutions suitable for continued support of research studies in the VINCI environment. 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 new and existing research studies in the VINCI environment.

Additional market research was conducted in March 2017 by issuing Request for Information (RFI) #53493 on NASA SEWP V GWAC to identify resellers of Tegile hardware and any related equivalent brands. The RFI yielded a total of six responses of which two responses were potentially capable of meeting the Government's requirements. One of these two responses offered Tegile; the other offered Nimble. VINCI technical experts analyzed the specifications of the Nimble product and determined that it is not interoperable with the current VINCI environment. Tegile is the only hybrid storage array that addressed the five network technologies required for the subject effort.

9. Other Facts: None.