

Justification for Other than Full and Open Competition
Coordination Matrix


Name

12/5/17
Date

Concur/Non-Concur

For: 

Acting Director

Technology Acquisition Center-Austin (0032B2H)

Office of Acquisition Operation

Department of Veterans Affairs

JUSTIFICATION FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Office of Procurement, Acquisition, and Logistics
Technology Acquisition Center
1701 Directors Blvd
Austin, TX 78744
2. Description of Action: The proposed action is for a firm-fixed-priced delivery order under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) for Cisco Unified Computing System (USC) servers, licenses, and switches, and NetApp Disk Array Enclosures (DAE) equipment, licenses, and associated support services.
3. Description of the Supplies or Services: VA, Office of Information and Technology (OI&T), Information Technology Operations and Services (ITOPS), has a requirement to expand the storage and computing capacity of the FlexPod Converged Virtualization Infrastructures (CVI) at the Denver Health Access Center (HAC) and the Atlanta Health Eligibility Center (HEC), its disaster recovery and alternative operating location. The full augmentation of the existing system requires additional storage and computing capacity with brand name NetApp DAE equipment (quantity of 2), Cisco UCS servers (quantity of 6), 6 Cisco modules, 8 Cisco blade servers, and 2,352 NetApp ONTAP Data Management software. The FlexPod® is a Cisco proprietary integrated virtualization, computing, and storage solution composed of NetApp and Cisco proprietary products, with brand name or equal cabling and accelerator hardware. Specifically, this effort will expand the storage and compute capacity of existing FlexPod® CVI throughout Regions 1 through 6, thereby allowing Research systems across 234 Field Operations-managed facilities to store their data information in redundant High Available (HA) systems capable of fault tolerance that are compliant with contingency planning regulations. The FlexPod® platform is configured and certified using the Cisco Validated Design methodology, and the components are designed to seamlessly integrate with one another and the existing infrastructure. A Cisco Validated Design methodology is a Cisco approved process for combining servers, storage resources, and the network fabric, providing the foundation for systems designed based on common use cases or current engineering system priorities. This effort will expand existing storage system capabilities, allowing HAC and HEC ITOPS managed facilities in Region 6 to fully support the data center virtualization of the Veteran Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (CHOICE) dedicated Servers and associated databases used in processing payment transactions and secure data in redundant, High-Available systems capable of fault tolerances that are compliant with contingency planning regulations. This procurement allows VA to modify existing systems to virtualize storage and computing space required for use by existing and future applications in direct support of VA Chief Business Office, CHOICE, and community care payment system. It will allow VA to perform analytics and development environment for application upgrades, which directly supports CHOICE and Patient Care, in order to be compliant with National Institute of Standards 800-53 Contingency Planning and Media Protection requirements. VA Chief Business Office, in concert with VHA CHOICE

Program Management, recommends that OI&T augment and initiate data migration of the Denver HAC and Atlanta HEC data centers and implement a process for ensuring the uninterrupted operations of the electronic payment transactions to outside medical providers as to ensure continued compliance with Congressional mandates to reduce Veteran care wait times and access to proper medical care. ITOPS formed working teams to conduct numerous interviews, and an in-depth analysis of the HAC and HEC facilities to identify computing and storage shortfalls. After data was assessed, the recommendation in September 2017 was to move forward with a converged virtualization infrastructure.

Delivery and installation shall be within 90 days after receipt of order. In order to ensure that the Cisco USC servers remain operational, the Cisco UCS servers come with a 12-month warranty, after which the warranty support will be covered under the national Smartnet contract. The NetApp Premium Enterprise hardware and software maintenance support shall include remote assistance, patches, bug fixes, and minor and major software upgrades. NetApp warranty support service (which includes installation) shall co-term with existing Enterprise Software License warranty support services: Existing Tier I warranty expires October 31, 2019, and the existing Tier II warranty support services expire January 31, 2022. The total estimated value is [REDACTED]

4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting an exception to fair opportunity is Section 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: Based on market research, as described in paragraph 8 of this justification, it was determined that limited competition is available among authorized resellers for the procurement of Cisco USC servers, licenses, and switches; NetApp DAE equipment, licenses, and associated support services

As the below analysis will show, any other CVI consisting of different brands will not be able to communicate with the existing FlexPod® CVI infrastructure currently in place throughout the 234 facilities consisting of Cisco UCS servers; NetApp data storage systems; disk shelves; storage arrays; and interconnection hardware, software and firmware,

a. Rationale for expansion of storage and compute capacity of the existing FlexPod® CVIs at 234 facilities:

The FlexPod® environment was created with Cisco and NetApp hardware and software products for a complete solution, and require the same OEM hardware to operate at maximum capacity when expanding the storage and compute capacity.

Only brand name NetApp products can meet the Governments interoperability and compatibility requirements. The NetApp products rely on proprietary NetApp microcoding to communicate with each other in order to connect with NetApp products, the interface to which is not public and to which the government has no technical data or right to access or release to a third party, thus preventing any other vendor's hardware from interfacing with NetApp products. For example, other vendor storage controllers and disk shelves are not compatible as each vendor has their own proprietary hardware and software in providing storage, and therefore no other vendor's hardware/software system would be able to exchange data or store data transferred from NetApp hardware even if the hardware were physically connected to already-installed NetApp hardware. Additionally, no other cluster interconnection hardware is interoperable or compatible with the currently fielded NetApp storage systems and NetApp Data ONTAP Operating System feature software product. If VA were to utilize any other brand name hardware and software, it would not operate in the current infrastructure due to the inability of any other vendor's products from interfacing with the already-installed NetApp products.

Only Cisco products can meet the Governments interoperability and compatibility requirements for expanding the storage of the existing FlexPod® CVIs at 234 facilities.

Within the Cisco Validated Design FlexPod®, the Cisco UCS servers communicate to the NetApp hardware using Cisco Fabric Interconnects (FI). The Cisco FI is a core part of the Cisco UCS, providing uniform access to both networks and storage as an aggregation point. The Cisco LAN Enterprise licenses are the aggregate management of UCS FIs. No other connection methods are supported or can be implemented with full integration for the FlexPod® environment because it is a proprietary Cisco interface protocol that is not public and to which the government has no technical data or right to access or release to a third party vendor.. If VA were to utilize any other brand name hardware and software, it would not operate in the current infrastructure due to the the inability to electronically or physically interface with the Cisco products. Procurement of any other brand of hardware would invalidate the Cisco Validated Design certification for the already-installed system and could potentially cause latency and stability issues when expanding the existing systems.

In regards to the TBE platform, the Cisco switches will be an expansion of the existing set of nexus switches within the platform. Clients participate in Link Aggregation Control Protocol groups that stretch across the stack, and thus the switches must support Virtual Port Channel Configuration (VPC). Cisco VPC is proprietary and is not available on third-party switches. No other switches are supported, or can be implemented with full integration into the TBE platform because it is a proprietary Cisco protocol. If VA were to utilize any other brand of switches could cause latency and stability issues to the existing system.

Because of these proprietary restrictions, the required Cisco UCS servers, NetApp DAE hardware, and NetApp software are the only products which are fully interoperable and compatible with the existing FlexPod® CVI infrastructure currently utilized within the 234

facilities and therefore the only products that can provide for the required expansion of the storage and compute capacity of the existing FlexPod CVI .

b. Rationale for NetApp support services and maintenance:

As previously discussed in section 3 of this Justification, the Cisco USC servers and ancillary hardware warranty support will be covered under the national Smartnet contract. The required technical support services are NetApp Premium Enterprise hardware and software maintenance support, which include the following:

- 24 x 7 x 365 remote help support
- 4-hour response time
- Installation of minor/major software upgrades
- Hardware and software support
- Troubleshooting

These support services are required to ensure that the procured servers and DAE storage hardware run efficiently. Failure to acquire the aforementioned support will prevent the VA team from obtaining fixes and patches to identify security vulnerabilities and defect resolutions. Due to the proprietary nature of the hardware and software, only NetApp or its authorized resellers can provide the required support NetApp components within the FlexPod® CVI and TBE environment, and the licenses keys necessary for the products to operate. NetApp or its authorized resellers are the only source available that can provide software updates, troubleshooting, patches, and version releases as well as authorize hardware replacement and remediation services. Other manufacturers do not have the proprietary source code and hardware replacement parts necessary to provide the required maintenance and support. Support services performed by parties not authorized by NetApp invalidate product warranties and remove liability for performance from the manufacturer. VA relies heavily on patient care data research stored within the existing Flexpod® CVI and TBE platforms storage solutions for various Patient Care projects. Procurement of the required maintenance and support will ensure that the storage systems remain operational, with software updates, patches and version releases without interruption to the system.

Additionally, only NetApp can provide the required hardware support as only NetApp has access to the proprietary microcode utilized by NetApp hardware's core software. Access to the microcode is required for updates as well as bug fixes to the NetApp hardware. Updates and patches to the hardware's core software are required to maintain compatibility with other NetApp software. If any other source were to provide hardware maintenance on the NetApp products, they would not be able to access the hardware microcode to provide updates and patches, and as such the NetApp hardware would not remain compatible with the NetApp software.

c. Rationale for using a single delivery order (and single vendor) for the procurement:

VA's requirement is for the expansion of the storage and compute capacity of the FlexPod® CVI infrastructure and its TBE platform. Failure to utilize one source to provide the Cisco and NetApp items and services will result in configuration and installation issues since these efforts must be done at the same time to ensure full interoperability and compatibility of the new items and the currently fielded Cisco and NetApp infrastructure. Failure to install the required Cisco UCS servers and NetApp DAE hardware and software as an integrated update will create a major impact on the organizations due to critical performance damage from delays, possible nullification of existing warranties and maintenance agreements and likely corruption of data. Utilizing two or more vendors to install and configure 234 facilities will cause tremendous communication issues, potential configuration issues, and an increased implementation schedule and the corresponding financial impact of all aforementioned issues. Therefore, procuring this requirement under one delivery order action for the delivery, deployment, and configuration of the NetApp/Cisco products, at all facilities, is the only approach to ensure for the successful completion of the existing storage infrastructure.

Additionally, since the FlexPod® design is a multi-product environment, only a single authorized vendor can install, configure, and verify the additional hardware and software in accordance with the Cisco Validated Design within each location. The configuration must be done by a single vendor to be in compliance with the Cisco Validated Design methodology.

Based on the above, the program and technical points of contact determined that only FlexPod® CVIs consisting of Cisco and NetApp products can meet VA's interoperability and compatibility requirement and that the most efficient manner is by one order to a single vendor.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in the market research section of this justification. This effort did not yield any additional sources that could meet the Government's technical requirements. However, it was determined that limited competition is viable among authorized resellers for the brand name requirements. In accordance with FAR 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2), the resulting contract award will be synopsisized at award on the Federal Business Opportunities webpage and the Justification will be made publically available. Additionally, the Justification will be posted on the NASA SEWP V GWAC website with the solicitation to notify all interested parties.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: 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. Specifically, the government will continue to research similar servers, switches, disk arrays, software and maintenance services to determine if new products enter the marketplace that are compatible with the CVI described above.

8. Market Research: VA's technical experts conducted market research in May 2017, to ascertain the ability of any other source other than NetApp and Cisco or the authorized resellers that can provide the aforementioned products and services by

performing web searches of other similar hardware, software, and services from [REDACTED] as well as conducting telephonic conversations and reviewing previous similar procurements. Each vendor confirmed their hardware cannot interoperate and is not compatible with the existing FlexPod CVI. While these vendors provide similar hardware and software support, they cannot provide the NetApp products, licenses, and support, and Cisco products, for the FlexPod CVI. Similarly, while other vendors possess general capabilities needed to provide similar services, no other source was found to meet VA's needs due to the proprietary source code specific to the maintenance and liaison support for this particular software. Therefore, unauthorized software and hardware providers do not have access to the proprietary data, source codes, and protocols of the software in order to provide the required hardware and software for FlexPod CVI as well as maintenance and liaison support in order to provide NetApp software maintenance, updates, and virtual technical support services.

The Contract Specialist conducted market research in November 2017, by using the NASA SEWP V GWAC Market Research tool and found several service-disabled Veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) NASA SEWP V GWAC holders under Group B(2) SDVOSB that are registered as Authorized Resellers for both Cisco and NetApp.

9. Other Facts: None.

10. Technical and Requirements Certification: I certify that the supporting data under my cognizance, which are included in this justification, are accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

[Redacted]

Date: 12/7/2017

Division Chief

Signature: [Redacted]

11. Fair and Reasonable Cost Determination: I hereby determine that the anticipated price to the Government for this action will be fair and reasonable based on adequate price competition and discounts among NASA SEWP V GWAC holders who are resellers of the required brand name Cisco USC servers and switches, and NetApp DAE equipment, licenses, and associated support services. NASA SEWP V GWAC holder catalog prices have already been determined to be fair and reasonable. Additionally, price analysis shall be conducted by comparing the proposed prices will be compared to the Independent Government Cost Estimate.

[Redacted]

Date: 12-7-2017

Procuring Contracting Officer

Signature: [Signature]

12. Procuring Contracting Officer Certification: I certify that this justification is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

[Redacted]

Date: 12-7-2017

Procuring Contracting Officer


Signature: [Signature]

Approval

In my role as Advocate for Competition, based on the foregoing justification, I hereby approve the acquisition for Cisco Unified Computing System (USC) servers, licenses, and switches, and NetApp DAE equipment, licenses, and associated support services as an exception to fair opportunity, pursuant to the statutory authority cited in section 4 above, subject to the availability of funds, and provided that the services and products herein have otherwise been authorized for acquisition.

Date: 12-7-17

Signature: 


Advocate for Competition
Technology Acquisition Center
Office of Procurement, Acquisition, and
Logistics