

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 the issuance of a firm-fixed-price Delivery Order under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC).
3. Description of the Supplies or Services: VA, Office of Information and Technology (OI&T), has a requirement for forty-three (43) brand name Cisco Stackable Network Access Switches and twenty (20) brand name Cisco Small Form-factor Pluggable (SFP) Transceiver Modules.

These items will be stacked with existing switches at the Clarksburg Medical Facility to support the overhead paging system replacement project. The performance period for this acquisition requires delivery of the hardware no later than thirty (30) days from date of contract award. The total estimated value of the proposed action 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 section 8 of this justification it is determined that limited competition is available among authorized resellers for the required Cisco hardware. It is necessary to expand existing switches with the new equipment noted in paragraph 3, to form one logical switch per closet (i.e. an integrated system of switches that function together and can be configured and managed as if they are one, but retain the cumulative device-supporting capacity of all component switches) to support a replacement of the overhead paging system. The previous analog paging system is thirty years old and is being replaced by a digital paging system requiring each speaker to be connected to a network switch providing Power over Ethernet functionality. An expansion of the current network switch array is necessary to accommodate the total number of speakers to be installed. It is critical that the switches to be procured under this action are fully interoperable with the existing Cisco switches in order to form one logical switch and allow for effective configuration, management, and maintenance of the installed system. Only Cisco switches are fully interoperable with the existing hardware and able to provide full functionality. The brand name Cisco SFP Transceiver Modules are fiber connector modules that will be used in connecting the switches to form one logical

switch, and only brand name Cisco SFP Transceiver Modules can provide full functionality when connecting the Cisco switches.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted in May 2018, details of which are in the market research section of this document. This research did not yield any other sources that can meet the Government's technical requirements. Although the Government is limiting competition as a result of specifying Cisco brand name products, there are multiple resellers of the required hardware that hold current NASA SEWP V GWACs. In accordance with FAR 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(D), this action will be synopsisized and the justification will be made publicly available on the Federal Business Opportunities website within 14 days of award. In addition, in accordance with FAR 16.505(a)(4)(iii)(A)(1), this justification will be posted with the solicitation on the NASA SEWP website.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: In order to remove or overcome barriers to competition in future acquisitions for the requirements described herein, the agency will continue to perform market research to ascertain if there are changes in the marketplace that would enable future actions to be competed.

8. Market Research: The Government's technical experts conducted market research by reviewing vendor technical documentations (Juniper, Brocade, HP, and Cisco) in May 2018 to ascertain the ability of any other source to provide the aforementioned switches. Additionally, in July 2018 the Government's technical experts conducted market research on the SFP Transceiver Modules by reviewing technical documentation for Cisco and other third-party manufacturers, such as Axiom. The market research confirmed that Cisco equipment is the only equipment that is interoperable with the existing Cisco equipment. All other brands do not provide the ability to create a single logical switch with existing equipment already in place. Additionally, VA subject matter experts regularly review trade publications, conduct internet market research, and review any similar equipment as an ongoing effort to determine if other brand name products, such as Juniper, Dell, or Brocade can meet the Government's requirements. The non-Cisco switches reviewed fail to meet the requirement for the fabric extension capabilities with the existing Cisco equipment. Only brand name Cisco SFP Transceiver Modules are capable of full interoperability and functionality of trunks and interconnections when connecting the newly-procured switches with the existing ones. Furthermore, third party SFPs would prevent the ability to effectively and quickly recover during unscheduled outages, which would be detrimental to patient care at the Clarksburg Medical Facility. Based on these efforts, the Government has determined that only the Cisco brand name hardware can meet all of VA's technical requirements.

9. Other Facts: None

