

JUSTIFICATION FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity:

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Office of Procurement, Acquisition, and Logistics
Technology Acquisition Center
23 Christopher Way
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).

3. Description of the Supplies or Services:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Office of Information and Technology requires installation of a location-based Wi-Fi network to provide an industry-standard wireless network in newly constructed Building 101 located in Seattle, WA. This action represents an expansion of the wireless mobility technology currently in place for the Puget Sound (PUG) Information Technology (IT) Area, which currently consists of solely Cisco Unified Wireless Network (CUWN) hardware (Access Points (APs), Wireless LAN Controllers (WLCs) and associated incidental cable plant, mounting hardware), software, and licenses. This procurement requires the delivery and installation of the following brand name Cisco hardware and associated software and licenses: Cisco 3850 Stackable Network Access Switches (WS-C3850-48P-L) and Cisco 802.11a/b/g/n Lightweight APs (AIR-CAP2702i-B-K9 - Dual-band controller-based 802.11a/g/n). Additionally, this procurement requires professional services to include: design, engineering, installation, configuration, validation, and testing of the infrastructure. The period of performance will require delivery of all hardware as well as completion of all design, installation, configuration, validation, and testing services within nine (9) months of award. The total estimated price of the proposed action is \$~~147,832.00~~.

4. Statutory Authority:

The statutory authority permitting an exception to fair opportunity is Section 41 U.S.C. 4106(c) as implemented by 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 extensive market research, as described in Section 8, it is determined that limited competition is available for the brand name Cisco Stackable Network Access Switches and APs. The Wi-Fi network for Puget Sound Building 101 is required to leverage and connect to the PUG IT Area's existing CUWN infrastructure. Therefore, the solution must be fully interoperable and compatible with the existing CUWN infrastructure.

VA is reliant upon Wi-Fi technology in the delivery of healthcare services to veterans. VA utilizes Wi-Fi communications so that healthcare providers and administration staff can connect remotely to the Veterans Information Systems and Technology Architecture and access patient records, treatment plans, and other healthcare support data without being tied to a deskbound solution. The VA deploys a wide variety of Wi-Fi-enabled equipment to support patient care services including, but not limited to: Medication Carts, Vital Signs Monitors, EKG/ECG Carts, IV Pumps, Portable X-Ray Machines, Sonography carts, Temperature/Environmental Controls, Logistics/Canteen Scanners, Patient Information Boards, Barcode Printers, Vo-Fi handsets, and desktops computers and laptops. In addition to the centralized management paradigm, the VA leverages the Cisco Mobility Service Engines to perform Real Time Location Services. These are a proprietary component of the CUWN architecture. The use of this technology produces Radio Frequency fingerprinting of devices to locate its position within a site campus with a 30' accuracy. Disruption in Wi-Fi communications has a very visible and tangible adverse impact to patient care and administrative operations of the affected area(s).

Puget Sound IT Area's existing CUWN is an enterprise class wireless system wherein centralized hierarchical hardware configuration, management, monitoring, and alerting occurs. This top down architecture provides a mechanism and methodology to provide FIPS 140-2 validated communications for the enterprise which is scaleable, flexible, and secure. The CUWN utilizes a suite of proprietary product hardware, features, and licenses. Cisco APs are part of this unified hardware and software solution that enables the VA to wirelessly communicate information through the Office of Information Technology's enterprise network. Only brand name Cisco APs are compatible and interoperable with the existing CUWN infrastructure, which is proprietary to Cisco. Due to the proprietary nature of Cisco's code, no other manufacturer's APs are compatible and interoperable with the current infrastructure. Further, market research has determined that only the CUWN provides the end-to-end comprehensive FIPS 140-2 Validated configuration, management, monitoring, alerting and RTLS solution that the VA needs to perform its mission.

The required Cisco Stackable Network Access Switches will be directly integrated into the existing Cisco Stackable Network Access Switch stacks at Puget Sound Building 101 to form fully interoperable switch stacks that function as a single logical switch. The additional switches are required to support the newly-procured APs, as each AP must be connected to an Access Switch port. The existing switch stacks do not have the available capacity to support installation of the additional networking hardware being procured and installed under this effort, and only Cisco network switches are fully interoperable with the existing stacks. Attempting to directly integrate another original equipment manufacturer's (OEM's) network switches to the existing Cisco stack is not possible due to proprietary hardware stacking cables and interdevice communication protocol. Adding another OEM switch as a stand alone Access switch prevents the ability to configure and maintain all the switch stacks as a single integrated entity and creates a new network segment which would require independent management from the rest. An integrated network switch stack ensures network operational resilience operation in the event that any single switch in the stack fails.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition:

Market research was conducted in March and August 2018, details of which are provided in section 8 of this justification. This effort did not yield any additional sources that can meet the Government's requirements. However, it was determined that limited competition is viable among resellers for these brand name items. In accordance with FAR 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(D), this action will be synopsized, and this justification will be made publicly available within 14 days of award on the Federal Business Opportunities Page. Additionally, this justification shall be posted with the solicitation on the NASA SEWP web site for review by prospective GWAC holders.

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.

8. Market Research:

Market research was conducted by VA wireless technology subject matter experts (SMEs) in March 2018 by researching similar products via both direct outreach to other OEMs and internet catalog research and review. The subject matter experts found other similar products from the following manufacturers: Aerohive, Ubiquiti, and Hewlett Packard (Aruba). The subject matter experts concluded that both Aerohive and Ubiquiti failed to meet VA's requirements because they are not FIPS 140-2 certified, nor are they interoperable and compatible with the existing CUWN. The subject matter experts determined that Hewlett Packard (Aruba) does offer FIPS 140-2 certified solutions; however, those solutions do not meet the VA's requirements because they are not interoperable and compatible with the existing CUWN. Additionally, VA's SMEs conducted internet catalog research and review in August 2018 to confirm and revalidate prior market research concluding that no other OEM's Stackable Network Access Switches, to include those manufactured by HP, Brocade, and Juniper are capable of fully integrating with the existing array of Cisco Stackable Network Access Switches in order to function as a single logical switch. As a result of the market research, the Government's technical experts determined that none of the other OEMs examined can meet the Government's combined interoperability, compatibility, and security requirements, and as a result only the brand name Cisco Stackable Network Access Switches and APs are capable of meeting all of VA's requirements.

9. Other Facts:

None.