

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, New Jersey 07724
2. Description of Action: The proposed action is for F5 Networks Inc. (F5) brand name software maintenance support under a firm-fixed-priced task order, issued under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). The software maintenance support is required to support virtual environments within the current F5 network infrastructure in use within VA. This procurement shall include brand name F5 software maintenance supporting virtual environments.
3. Description of the Supplies or Services: The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), Office of Information and Technology, Information Technology Operations and Services, Infrastructure Operations (IO), Network Operations has a requirement for F5 BIG-IP and BIG-IQ Software Maintenance (F5 SWM) support. The F5 SWM support was originally purchased as part of an F5 software and equipment purchase made several years ago, which also included F5 SWM support. All options have been fully executed. The need for F5 SWM support continues and now requires renewal for ongoing software maintenance to maintain the F5 software infrastructure currently in use by IO data centers supporting virtual environments. The period of performance shall be from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020 with two, 12-month option periods to be exercised at the Government's discretion. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
4. Statutory Authority: Pursuant to Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 16.505(a)(4), the brand name requirement is being justified and approved as an exception to fair opportunity under the statutory authority of Section 41 U.S.C. 4106(c)(2) as implemented by 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: The purpose of this acquisition is to continue providing F5 SWM support for F5 BIG-IP and BIG-IQ software (F5 management software), which centrally manages virtual environments and provides crucial device backup and restore capability for F5 load balancer infrastructure currently deployed throughout the IO data centers. The F5 management software provides automated configuration imaging and software backups in an automated manner. Additionally, the F5 management software allows VA to monitor the health of the F5 load balancers and perform configuration management through the centralized management server. The current platform VA uses for these processes does not backup the F5 devices in binary format.
[REDACTED]

Consequently, VA cannot restore data in the event of a failure. No other software product performs these vital functions. This brand-name F5 management software is the only software available that will meet these requirements, and the brand name F5 SWM support is the only software support that can be used to maintain the existing F5 management software. Furthermore, because the F5 management software is proprietary, only F5 can provide the F5 SWM support required to provide software security patches and updates.

For these reasons, only F5 SWM support can be used to meet VA's requirements to maintain the F5 management software that is currently in use at the IO data centers. If this purchase is not made, IO Data Centers will be utilizing unsupported F5 management software that cannot receive security patches and updates to keep the software optimally operational and free of security vulnerabilities.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in Section 8 of this justification. This effort did not yield any additional sources that can meet the Government's requirements. However, the undersigned VA technical representative determined that limited competition is available among authorized resellers for brand name F5 SWM support. In accordance with FAR 16.505(a)(4)(iii)(A)(1), this justification will be provided with the solicitation to all appropriate NASA SEWP V GWAC holders. Furthermore, in accordance with FAR 5.301, 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(D), and 16.505(a)(4)(iii), the award notice for this action will be synopsisized on the Federal Business Opportunities website and this justification will be made publicly available within 14 days of award.

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: The Government's technical experts conducted limited market research by reviewing F5 software support maintenance packages from the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) during April and May 2019. The F5 management software and F5 SWM support, currently in use, is commercially available off-the-shelf. It was confirmed the F5 management software (BIG-IP and BIG-IQ) that is currently used, continues to be proprietary and only F5 and its authorized partners and resellers can provide F5 SWM support to maintain the F5 management software currently in use at IO data centers. The Government's technical experts reviewed other manufacturers of similar software and support, such as Solarwinds and Spiceworks. These OEMs cannot provide F5 SWM support because the F5 management software, including its updates and patches are proprietary and only F5 can provide maintenance for the software it developed and sells. No other OEM has the capability to develop and issue software maintenance coverage for F5 management software that is necessary to support existing IO requirements. Based on these market research efforts, the Government's technical experts have determined that only brand name F5 SWM support can meet VA's needs.

Additional market research was conducted by utilizing the NASA SEWP V GWAC



Provider Lookup Tool. There are 90 contract holders listed that provide F5 products and services. Therefore, there is competition anticipated for the F5 software maintenance.

9. Other Facts: None.

