



GSA Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS) Case Study: Providing the Government's Future Infrastructure Now

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OVERVIEW

The President's Management Agenda (PMA) lays out a long-term vision for modernizing the federal government in key areas that will improve the ability to deliver mission outcomes, provide excellent service, and effectively steward taxpayer dollars on behalf of the American people.

The need to modernize the Federal government's legacy infrastructure, IT Modernization, is one of the critical drivers under the PMA. IT Modernization, the backbone of how government serves the public, is a parallel driver and enabler for the PMA's other two drivers - Data, Accountability and Transparency and People and Workforce of the Future. These two drivers provide the tools to deliver better results to the American public and hold Agencies accountable to taxpayers empowered by a modern, skilled workforce to meet evolving mission needs.

Awarded in July 2017, Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS) is GSA's 15-year, \$50 billion government-wide program that provides all federal agencies with mission-critical telecommunications infrastructure and IT services and is a key element of the IT Modernization Initiative. EIS gives agencies forward-leaning and flexible contract solutions that have been

"With the President's Management Agenda vision in mind of laying 'out a long-term vision for modernizing the Federal Government', GSA looked to the future with EIS."

– *Suzette Kent, Federal CIO, Office of Management and Budget*

designed in collaboration with industry partners and provides streamlined access to mission-essential, cutting-edge services needed to modernize IT infrastructure now and for years to come. EIS is especially important and timely to the Administration as they are implementing government-wide plans to modernize IT and telecommunications infrastructures while also improving security across all layers. The capabilities included in EIS are essential to agencies meeting those infrastructure and security requirements.

GSA has taken an expansive view of key IT infrastructure by including capabilities such as cloud-hosting and contact center infrastructures for agencies wishing to take a single approach to the provision of modernized IT infrastructure. GSA and its partner agencies, with support from industry, OMB, and other stakeholders, like Congress, have collaborated well to provide government with a set of capabilities to ensure all agencies can transform how their missions are accomplished to meet 21st century needs.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In addition to facilitating the President's Management Agenda vision, GSA needed to replace the expiring Networx contracts, which provided telecommunications and related IT infrastructure services to virtually every Federal government department and agency and is foundational to the government's IT. GSA saw an opportunity to add efficiencies and improve services by considering an integrated solution that also encompasses the needs met by GSA's regional Local Service Agreement (LSA) contracts and the Washington Interagency Telecommunications System (WITS), which would also be expiring.

The scale of the challenge was immense due to the size, complexity, reach and criticality of Networkx, WITS and the LSA vehicles and a multitude of stakeholders. The solution needed to be flexible to evolve with the fast-changing technology landscape.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Collaboration with Agencies, Industry, Stakeholders

GSA and its partner agencies, with support from industry, OMB, and other stakeholders, like Congress, collaborated to provide government with a set of capabilities to ensure all agencies can transform how their missions are accomplished to meet 21st century needs. And, the House Armed Services

Committee lawmakers added provisions to the FY20 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which requires GSA "...to instruct each agency to adopt an updated transition management plan and an integrated transition time line, as recommended by the Government Accountability Act. Further, the committee directs GSA to provide a report, no later than 60 days following enactment of this act, detailing steps taken to ensure a timely and efficient transition to EIS that maximizes competition, efficiencies and taxpayer savings...". The EIS program vision was presented at various industry events, including the annual Federal Networks Conference, the IT Acquisition Summit, and ACT-IAC's N&T COI meetings.

Market Research

With EIS, GSA sought to establish a robust competitive federal marketplace by aggregating the overall federal spend for advanced network-enabled products/services and infrastructure. EIS requirements were developed in collaboration with industry and agencies. It started with the Network Services 2020 (NS2020) Strategy and entailed an in-depth "lessons learned", including review of Networkx, the transition to Networkx, GAO reports, hundreds of interviews with agencies and industry, reviewing the structure of other contracts, and recommendations from ACT-IAC's Networks & Telecommunications "Community of Interest". GSA conducted a detailed market analysis

"As GSA continues to lead government-wide technology modernization initiatives, the Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS) contracts are another great example of how we're helping our agency partners. The EIS contracts allow agencies to acquire integrated and streamlined solutions at reduced prices."

*– Emily Murphy, Administrator,
GSA*

GSA Increased Government Collaboration

GSA conducted executive-level multi-agency meetings in development of EIS requirement:

- Used "myth busting", other modern communications
- Draft Request for Proposal (RFP) drew 1,200 feedback items from 15 companies & 405 from agencies
- Conducted 60 meetings with industry, comments reviewed and incorporated into the final RFP

and spearheaded the multi-agency NS2020 “Infrastructure Advisory Group”, a group of senior representatives from every major agency.

GSA collaborated with ACT-IAC on three successful EIS “Information Exchange” sessions. With broad participation, these sessions significantly informed the overall NS2020 strategy and the EIS acquisition. ACT-IAC’s EIS support throughout epitomized the spirit of government-industry collaboration.

Considering Lessons Learned from the Past

Communications with Agencies and Industry

GSA launched a collaborative, interactive EIS web space, “GSA Interact” and posted EIS updates, comments, and feedback. With over 1400 registered users, this site continues to be an effective communications platform today.

Networkx “Lessons Learned”

EIS contract requirements reflected extensive market research and Networkx lessons. GSA leveraged data on agency purchasing on Networkx and its LSA contracts. In close partnership with DHS on EIS, GSA considered IT security and government-wide cybersecurity needs up front and built in flexibility to update existing and new cyber security services, as needed, in response to evolving threats. Like Networkx, EIS included national policy requirements, such as provisions for National Security and Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) and support for Internet Protocol Version 6 (IPv6). GSA also considered post-award operations and the need for spend visibility and expense management, which led to well-thought-out management and operations and data reporting requirements. This led to GSA’s creation of Conexus for Agencies, a system for EIS expense management. Importantly, GSA’s Program Office and Acquisition Office worked together as a cohesive and fully integrated team.

“Among the challenges are the immediate needs that all Agencies are facing with Covid-19, the associated legislative requirements, the changing nature of work, and the increasing demands on Agency infrastructure.”

— Bill Zielinski, Assistant
Commissioner, Office of IT Category,
Federal Acquisition Service, GSA

RESULTS

EIS Contract Offerings: Competition, Cost Savings, Products and Services

Breaking New Ground

GSA’s EIS breaks new ground by providing agencies with the ability to draw upon industry best practices, provides a transition path to emerging transformational technologies, and offers a modern replacement for legacy products and services. EIS provides for a lower-cost model with a modern telecommunications infrastructure. EIS introduces new capabilities and outlines a technology path toward modernization by offering new and emerging technologies. These technologies enable an agency to take advantage of combining services such as Ethernet, Voice over IP, and SD-WAN into a single delivery method over a modern infrastructure, enabling transformation to future technologies. EIS encompasses 37 service categories, including both legacy and modern technologies and increased core-

based statistical area (CBSA) to 929 geographic areas defined by OMB. This logical grouping by service categories and the EIS award criteria promoted increased vendor participation and expanded competition. Furthermore, EIS's structure and guidance from GSA make it easier for agencies to move away from a "winner take all" bidding strategy. EIS also offers diverse and creative agency-specific solutions, offers prices well below benchmarks for common services, and provides agencies with the ability to define mission-critical services transition planning.

More Competitive Contracting Marketplace

With EIS, GSA sought to establish a robust competitive federal marketplace with new innovations that make the program more flexible for agencies and speed up the process for acquiring emerging technologies. Innovative ideas include "catalogs" to allow more efficient management of specific services (e.g., Managed Security Services), hardware and software components as well as "Task Order Unique" and "Individual Case Basis" Contract Line Item Numbers (CLINs) to allow agencies to more effectively manage their task-order specific requirements.

Also, EIS introduced "Pricing HUBs" that allow industry to create local, regional, and national pricing structures and the "CBSA" service area concept which increased competition. Agencies are also using multiple task orders under a single solicitation to introduce more competition, encourage small businesses to bid on portions of the agency infrastructure/services.

"With EIS, SSA's IT Modernization plan will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our service, allow us to keep pace with changing technology and expectations, and ensure that we can continue to safeguard the sensitive information entrusted to us."

– *Rajive Mathur, Chief Information Officer and Deputy Commissioner for Systems, Social Security Administration*

Increased Cost Savings

Agencies can take advantage of the competition available under EIS to create savings and maximize taxpayer value. EIS provides cost savings by increased supplier competition and price transparency via the GSA Pricer and Prices Paid on GSA's Acquisition Gateway, thus improving agencies' negotiation leverage. Agencies using EIS can see significant savings, especially when coupled with modernization and optimization. Price savings vary depending upon the service, location, and additional price reductions that may occur at the agency task order level. These savings could result in overall cost reductions, dramatic increases in bandwidth or other network enhancements, introduction of new services, or a combination of these.

Provides Agencies Platform for IT Modernization and Data Transformation

Innovation

Key modernization trends agencies are employing include data center consolidation, managed network services, managed unified communications, Ethernet services, network consolidation and SD-WAN. Although SD-WAN is not a defined service offering on EIS at this point, agencies are taking advantage of existing flexible service offerings to include SD-WAN in their solicitations. Agencies are exploring the Zero Trust security and micro-segmentation models made possible through TIC 3.0 and under EIS.

Agencies Include Innovation in Task Orders

Of the 109 solicitations that have completed GSA In Scope Review (ISR):

- 79 have included the move or expansion of Ethernet or Voice Over IP (VOIP)
- 27 of these include Software Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) capabilities.

Transition in Stages

The great work of GSA, OMB and GAO has revealed that agencies are in various stages of transition. Agencies are performing cost assessments to guide stage development using the EIS agency/public prices to evaluate transformation/modernization, i.e., TDM voice vs. VoIP. Agencies are also working to future proof their solicitations as much as possible given the evolution of telecommunications services by building in options into their solicitations for future services, even if they do not plan to adopt them right away. This flexibility will enable agencies to pivot and/or swap transition stages as requirements evolve over time without the additional time and cost complete new separate acquisitions.

EIS Awards to Date

Agencies are pushing to meet EIS transition deadlines, employing concurrent agency and GSA review processes, as well as concurrent tech and price evaluations. GSA has employed the “Transition Ordering Assistance” program to provide transition assistance across agencies, allowing for the exchange of cross-agency best practices/lessons learned, standard templates, and modernization specific language. More information about how GSA is tracking, reporting and making transition data accessible can be found at: gsa.gov/eistransition.

In just over one year, agencies have released and awarded 37 EIS Task Orders totaling over \$7.4 billion. Some highlights of EIS awards, to date, include:

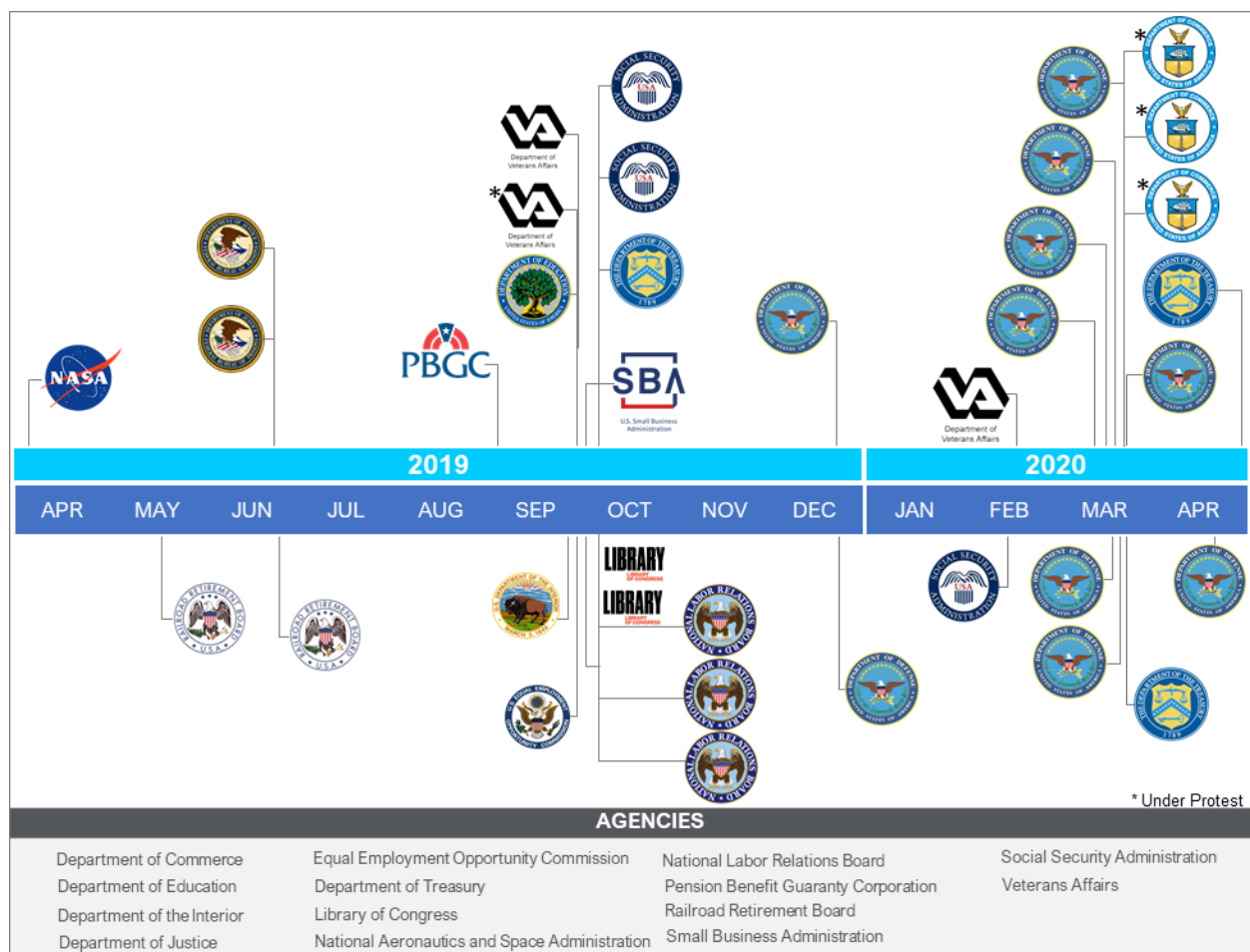
- **Department of Interior (DOI):** Awarded in January 2020, this \$1.6 billion task order with 11 one-year option periods could run until 2032 and offers core network services and access services.
- **Department of Justice (DOJ):** Awarded a 15-year, \$984 million EIS task order in July 2019. DOJ will transition to a next-generation communications platform supporting more than 120,000 employees across more than 2,100 locations. The fully managed solution includes a breadth of networking capabilities, including IP voice, data, security, cloud access and professional services.
- **Social Security Administration (SSA):** Verizon won a \$544 million task order and CenturyLink was awarded a 1-year, \$470.3 million EIS task order for Wide Area Network and related high-

Department of Treasury / Internal Revenue Service (IRS): \$341 million task order awarded to Verizon for Toll Free Contact Center – EIS (TFCCEIS).

- **Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA):** \$75 million task order award in January 2020 to provide secure connectivity to DoDEA's learning network. This task order marked the first EIS award made by the DoD. This task order marked the first EIS award made by the DoD.

- NASA:** \$14 million task order award in April 2019 to provide core backbone network services with speeds of up to 100 Gbps to NASA over a period of 9 ½ years.

- **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):** Awarded a \$48.9 million task order to CenturyLink and a \$55.6M task order to AT&T for collocated hosting services. The \$127.3 million voice services award to MetTel (currently under protest) while VA's RFP for data services, estimated at \$3.6 billion, is currently out for response and Q/A.



Source: gsa.gov/eistransition

LESSONS LEARNED

Partner with industry and other stakeholders (Congress)

GSA and its partner agencies, with support from industry, OMB, and other stakeholders, like Congress, collaborated well to provide government with a set of capabilities to ensure all agencies can transform how their missions are accomplished to meet 21st century needs. GSA applied “lessons learned” from GAO reports on the transition from FTS2001 to Networks to lay the groundwork for this increased collaboration.

Make IT modernization a priority and plan accordingly

EIS deployment could be delayed if an agency has not made the transition to EIS a priority. The Networkx contract has been extended twice, in 2017 and 2020, and will expire in 2023. These delays in transition to EIS can be costly to both agencies and the taxpayer. The 2020 Networkx extension will potentially cost

taxpayers \$2.08 billion. The delay will also preclude transformation to new and emerging technologies available on EIS and potentially limit an agency in its deployment of forward-looking or collaborative technologies. If agencies do not transition to EIS by the mandated dates, they risk losing access to critical services, missed cost savings, reduced capabilities and unrealized improvements by leveraging new technologies.

Transition Planning Now

Agencies should start planning while evaluating vendor bids so they can begin transition implementation once an award is made:

- Identify the transition team
- Develop a transition plan: identify services and/or locations and timelines

Take advantage of EIS’s emerging technologies and enhanced security

EIS has the ability to incorporate emerging technologies as they become commercially available. With 33% of the EIS awardees as small businesses, EIS also has an “on-ramp” capability to add new service providers that may emerge throughout the contract life. EIS is agile and responsive to advancements in technology and offers flexibility to update existing and new cybersecurity services in response to emerging threats. The EIS portfolio of cybersecurity solutions incorporates both DHS cyber requirements and OMB’s cyber policy directives.

Take a “right sized” and “right timed” modernization and transformation approach

Telecommunications is a critical capability for agencies and service availability is the first priority. Given this, agencies must prepare for when and how to modernize and transform while balancing risk with performance. Even if an agency wants to transition most or some services “like for like,” they should build-in modernization services and CLINs in the pricing workbook for later use. Agencies are also asking for modern capabilities at an enterprise level for their networks- like unified communications, SD-WAN and enterprise VOIP, which is more complex and takes more time to execute. Given EIS has a ten year runway, agencies are employing “right-sized” and “right-timed” modernization and transformation approaches. Once prices are established at the task order level, the agencies will perform cost-based analyses to further refine their modernization roadmaps and plan for the most effective path forward.

“Rather than simply modernize their existing systems, Agencies need to create a dynamic IT environment that can evolve as requirements evolve – with flexibility and capability built into every aspect of the enterprise, from the underlying infrastructure to the IT delivery model.”

– Joe Klimavicz –former Chief Information Officer, Dept. of Justice