



# GSA Polaris Recommendations Federal Insights Exchange GSA Working Group

# Introduction



- Variety of participation from industry
  - 48 people from 41 companies\*
  - Company sizes ranged from less than \$1M a year in Revenue to \$180B+ in annual revenue
  - Good mix of former government, former GSA, and industry veterans
- Feedback is structured as:
  - Problem we identified
  - Solution that we recommend
  - Pros and Cons of GSA implementing the recommendation
- Pros and Cons focus on:
  - Inclusion of current administration's priorities as it pertains to increased diversity, equity and inclusion in contracting
  - Value to agency customers
  - Protest risk
  - Ideal Award Profile

\* The full list of participants and member companies can be found on the last slide

# Agenda

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Provide feedback for the following areas (30 minutes):
  - Teaming Requirements, Award Profile, and Overall Vehicle Strategy (10 minutes)
  - Self-Scoring Worksheet / Evaluation Criteria (10 minutes)
  - SOW – Primary Relevant Experience Areas and Emerging Technology Areas (10 minutes)
- Conclusion and Q&A (20 minutes)

# Teaming Requirements, Award Profile, and Overall Vehicle Strategy

# Mentor Protégé Joint Ventures

## Problem

- Point based solicitations highly favor large businesses who have plenty of projects to score highly
- Large businesses could take a large share of the awardees through a MPJV since they can bring plenty of points to a MPJV
- Equity in contracting would be negatively impacted as these SBs would only receive 40% workshare and less awardees on the vehicle

## Solution

- Limit to 2 Relevant Experience examples that can be submitted by the Mentor
- Limit to 2 Emerging Technology Experience examples that can be submitted by the Mentor

## Pros

- Still allow MPJVs to bid
- Prevent very small SB prime offers from getting on the vehicle who wouldn't be qualified without a strong Mentor
- Allow the "small mid-tiers" (\$30-75M) to have access to the vehicle through a MPJV
- More standalone SB primes or those teaming with other small businesses would have a fair chance to win since the MPJV wouldn't be able to run up the score

## Cons

- Could potentially receive protest on this criteria

# Organizational Risk

## Problem

- Close and trusted relationships exist between organizations who have worked together internally developing solutions together (i.e. test labs, emerging technologies, software solutions, etc.) but without formal past performance with a Federal, State or Commercial Entity would not get credit for this score criteria.

## Solution

- Organizational Risk Assessment Points should be awarded if the Prime can clearly show to GSA that there is an existing working relationship through project documentation, contractual agreements, or joint deliverables.
- Would have to show working relationship was in existence for 6 months or more.

## Pros

- Allow for more emerging technologies to get on vehicle without increasing teaming risk because they've worked together before
- Allow for Primes to gain points by teaming with companies which they believe will be beneficial to the Government

## Cons

- May be difficult to verify "working together"
- Could have Primes submitting large number of subs

# Number of Awards

## Problem

- Limited number of Small Businesses will be on vehicle if low number of awards made, limiting the pool of vendors from which the Government can select from – especially if divided among 3 pools (HUBZone, WOSB, All Small)
- With a smaller pool, companies will grow out of Small size faster causing Government to have to onboard more often

## Solution

- Award to 300-400 companies with 40% going to HUBZone and WOSB and the remaining 60% to Small Businesses
- The percentages proposed are based on the Governments goals for WOSB, HUBZone and Small Businesses comparatively

## Pros

- Larger pool of contractors to choose from giving Government greater access to Industry
- Attrition of companies off the contract due to growth and size will be slower, due to sheer numbers, allowing longer times between onboarding process
- Will still most likely have limited number of bids on Task Orders since Small Businesses tend to be very selective on what they bid on due to costs of proposal efforts

## Cons

- More companies to maintain on vehicle

# Certifications and Clearances

## Problem

- Many emerging technology companies (i.e., non-traditional federal contractors) are very small and will not have the certifications and clearances such as ISO, CMMI, FCL's, etc. which, under the current strategy, will be prohibitive for them getting on the contract

## Solution

- Be more inclusive at the IDIQ Level, not requiring certifications to get on the IDIQ, but requiring solid past performance instead
- Require certifications and clearances at the Task Order level as required by the work

## Pros

- Allow a larger pool at the IDIQ level to select from giving the government greater reach into industry as required
- Allows Government to be as selective as necessary at the Task Order level

## Cons

- Larger pool at the IDIQ Level to have to maintain
- Could result in low number of awardees with certifications that some customers might prefer (like FCL for DOD)

# Evaluation Criteria

# Tiered Evaluation Approach

## Problem

- Smalls that team with larges in a MPJV will knock out true Small Businesses due to partners qualifications, putting Smalls going at it alone at a disadvantage

## Solution

- We recommend using a tiered approach for evaluations:
- **Tier 1:** 120-160 awards to the highest scored offerors who bid exclusively as HUBZone and/or WOSB
- **Tier 2:** 140-180 awards to the highest scored offerors who bid as a regular Small Business or exclusively as HUBZone and/or WOSB
- **Tier 3:** 60-140 awards to highest scored offerors including those bid as a MPJV

## Pros

- Will increase equity in contracting by providing better access to Polaris for HUBZone and WOSB
- Will give the Small HUBZone and WOSB businesses a fair “shot” of getting onto the IDIQ without needing to bid as a MPJV and give away workshare

## Cons

- A more complex evaluation approach could lead to a longer time to award
- Potential protests on unfair treatment to MPJVs

# Revenue Point Thresholds

## Problem

- An upper threshold of \$15M+ across 7 projects for maximum relevant experience points is excessive for small businesses
- This will prevent many of the companies GSA is looking to target to score high enough which will force them to no bid or bid as a CTA, JV, or MPJV instead of a standalone bidder

## Solution

- An upper revenue threshold of \$7.5-10M will allow more standalone small businesses to score high enough to bid alone

## Pros

- Increase equity in contracting by allowing more small businesses to participate without engaging in a MPJV

## Cons

- Might increase the point threshold for awardees

# Cost Accounting System Audits

## Problem

- Cost Accounting System Audits are only performed by the government when needed on a contract and they expire after a certain period of time.
- More DoD small businesses are required to have audited cost accounting systems as opposed to Federal Civilian small businesses. Generally speaking, more Federal Civilian contracts are firm fixed price or time and materials.

## Solution

- Allowing for third party audits which will allow more bidders to obtain an audit of their Cost Accounting System prior to the Polaris submission date

## Pros

- Allows firms that have not pursued Cost Plus/Cost Reimbursement contracts to participate
- Increases the vendor pool so the government has more access to emerging technology vendors

## Cons

- Potentially higher point threshold for awardees

# MA IDIQ Experience

## Problem

- Multiple Award IDIQ experience is desired in the Draft RFP, however, the resulting size of each annual task order is smaller compared to a multi-year task order, each with the same scope and complexity.

## Solution

- We suggest that GSA allow vendors to reference successive follow-on task orders under the same IDIQ for the same task as a single project. This allows an equitable comparison of performance across projects

## Pros

- Allows firms to get credit for the same (TO) work performed on an IDIQ.
- Allows firms to use the best past performance and experience examples based on scope

## Cons

- May be difficult to verify that the subsequent TO is the same scope/work of the prior TO.
- Could be greater burden to evaluate

# ANC/Tribal Affiliation

## Problem

- There are no clear guidelines for affiliation rules as it pertains to Alaskan Native and Tribally owned companies.

## Solution

- Companies that have affiliates should be able to use their experience and past performance to garner points

## Pros

- Increased diversity, equity and inclusion in contracting for the Alaskan Native and Tribally owned companies
- Not being able to reuse projects for experience and past performance areas will prevent too many subsidiary companies from bidding

## Cons

- Award pool size may need to increase to allow for these additional bidders

# SOW – Primary Relevant Experience and Emerging Technology Areas

# Emerging Technology

## Problem

- Emerging technologies and innovations are continually evolving.
- Current categories listed in C.3 may be restricting to some smaller SBs that specialize in other innovative solutions or technologies that are still nascent.
- Emerging technologies such as quantum computing are expensive and may be out of reach for several SBs.

## Solution

- Include in a sub section of 3.5 “Other/Future Emerging Technology” for example.
- Allow contractors to explain what their emerging technology offerings are and how they are beneficial to the government customers.
- Where applicable, allow contractors to map their emerging technology offerings to categories that are other than listed.

## Pros

- Gives government’s customers additional choices of technologies to work with.
- Allows more specialty SBs to have access to the vehicle.

## Cons

- Evaluation effort may increase slightly
- Could leave the “Other/Future Emerging Technology” area up to determination by the bidders as to what is included in the SOW

# Distributed Workforce Post-COVID

## Problem

- Post COVID experiences highlighted increase in digital divide between various geographies within CONUS and OCONUS.
- Information sharing, financial and supply chain platforms are still built as functional silos even with cloud services adoption which are expensive to adapt for regulation and contract modifications.
- The current set of tools and technologies that decentralized workforce use should be modernized.
- Cybersecurity and digital identities of decentralized workforce and end customers still have gaps that need to be addressed.
- Sustainability and Green IT must be a guiding principle.

## Solution

- Include a sub section 4.8 “Workforce and citizen engagement” which includes connected public services, multi-channel workforce and end-user engagement tools and technologies.
- Include a sub section 4.9 “Accelerated Legacy System Modernization” which includes composable services and design principles, and data sharing technologies.
- Include a sub section 3.6 “Sustainability and Green IT” which includes smart buildings, smart cities, smart supply chain systems, recyclables as examples.

## Pros

- Provides post COVID decentralized workforce and end-users of government systems a better and secure engagement experience.
- Achieve faster deployment of IT applications and services where needed more economically.
- Some categories under C.3, C.4 can be used to provide such solutions, however recommended categories provide contractors more targeted expectations.

## Cons

- Workforce and citizen engagement tools and technologies may get outdated, but combined with composable may be easier and cheaper to replace.

# Substantiating Emerging Technology Experience

## Problem

- Emerging technology terminology mentioned in the RFP may not translate verbatim into the SOWs either in federal or commercial space
- Conversely, SOWs may not include the terminology directly listed in the RFP.

## Solution

- As part of past performance, the scoring sheet or other response sections, allow existing SOW or task order modification language to be interpreted and mapped back to the emerging technologies categories.
- Consider allowing companies to explain how their experience and past performance map to the currently defined Emerging Technology terminology. This could include having the customer sign off on this explanation.

## Pros

- Allows more specialty Small Businesses to have access to the vehicle
- Increases the government's access to emerging technology

## Cons

- Could increase the difficulty of evaluation

# Experience Across SOW Areas

## Problem

- Experience related to C.3.x or C.4.x subtopics may cross over or have some commonality, however, the current Draft RFP does not allow for project references to be used for more than one Primary Relevant Experience Area

## Solution

- Allow project citations to be used more than once in the scoring sheet, past performance or other sections between C.3.x and C.4.x categories.

## Pros

- Allows more specialty SBs to have access to the vehicle.
- Increases innovation from companies otherwise left out of the contract.

## Cons

- Evaluation effort may increase slightly but benefit definitely outweighs the increased cost of evaluation.

# Conclusion and Q&A

- With all of these recommendations, we hope that there are a few that GSA finds valuable and can incorporate into the Final RFP to result in a stronger award profile and a more attractive vehicle for their agency customers
- Questions, comments, or feedback on these recommendations?

# Industry Participants

- Ah-reum Han - ITCON Services
- Benjamin Marks - Granite
- Bill Townsend - B3 Group
- Blake Harvey – Red Team Consulting
- Bob Cusack - Custom Software Systems
- Briana Coleman - The River North
- Charlie Caldwell - ManTech
- Cheryl Waldrup - Strongbridge Corporation
- Christina Wulff - Wolf Den Associates
- Clint Cates - Indigo IT
- Craig Schneider - Vertical Apps
- Darryl Peek - Google
- Denis Lynch - MBL Technologies
- Dillon Richard - B3 Group
- Emilie Scantlebury - Highlight Technologies
- Jennifer Hosking - Koniag
- Jim Hathaway - Tigua- Jtek LLC
- Juan Robles - Karsun Solutions
- Kaitlyn Nathman - Ardent MC
- Karen Hannon – Silosmashers Technologies
- Kay Ely - Deep Water Point
- Kimberly Purlia - Aveshka
- Maria Fitzpatrick - SharePoint Technologies
- Michael Drescher - TCG
- Michael McHugh - ASRC Federal
- Prasad Kanigicherla - KP Soft
- Saishree Shetty - Nolij Consulting
- Sam Coulson - Koniag
- Savin Joseph - CTAC
- Sherrie Nutzman - SharePoint Technologies
- Sohail Safeer - Datawiz
- Sudha Venkateswaran - Collabralink
- Victoria Allison - cBEYONData
- Michael Huffman - cBEYONData
- Bob Johnson - SNVC