



GSA cautions on telecom contract deadline

By Mark Rockwell, May 08, 2019

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The General Services Administration's September deadline for agencies to issue solicitations under its next-generation telecommunications contract is more of a warning, GSA officials overseeing the massive contract said.

"Not making this deadline is a yellow light" for agencies transitioning to the agency's 15-year, \$50 billion Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions contract, said Laura Stanton, GSA's deputy assistant commissioner for the IT category in the agency's Federal Acquisition Service, in remarks at an ACT-IAC conference on May 8.

In March, Bill Zielinski, acting assistant commissioner of GSA's Office of Information Technology Category, explained the agency was watching four milestones for EIS transition. By Sept. 30, GSA wants agencies to issue task orders for EIS. The agency will limit use of existing telecom contracts for agencies that haven't issued EIS task orders by March 31, 2020.

By March 31, 2022, GSA wants 90 percent of agency telecommunications off the existing Networkx and local contracts and on EIS. By May 2023, the transition should be complete, as those contracts expire.

If an agency blows through the yellow light in September, GSA will redouble efforts to engage it in its efforts to move to EIS, Stanton said. GSA will visit agencies that haven't met the deadline to see where it can help.

While the upcoming September date is a caution, the following March date is more important. If agencies miss the March 2020 milestone, the light "will go from yellow to red," Stanton warned. At that point, she said, "agencies may not have the time to make the transition" within the allotted three-year period.

Officials from the Department of Homeland Security and State Department outlined their plans for transformative EIS solicitations.

The State Department is looking to replace its legacy TDM/copper-line infrastructure throughout the continental U.S. and possibly in its overseas outposts, according to Kurt Meves, division chief at the agency. State is working on an EIS solicitation now, he said, that "will leave TDM behind," in favor of a unified communications infrastructure. "We're

collapsing" legacy TDM-based data and voice services, he said. "The challenge is getting people off the legacy mentality" that copper wireline-based TDM technology is more secure than IP-based services and technology.

DHS will issue a solicitation that will cover the agency's headquarters and components, Shawn Hughes, director of the agency's enterprise network modernization program and EIS, said at the conference. Component agencies, he said, will write task orders for EIS services from that contract.

With its EIS solicitation, DHS wants to inject mobility and future 5G capabilities to supplement the agency's "very brittle" OneNet backbone, as well as move to more agile software development and cloud services, said Hughes.

Both agency officials challenged potential vendors to help them transform their operations with the contract.

"I suggest you look at our [operational] footprint" in the U.S., said Meves. "Ante up with plans to reach" the agencies' offices spread across the country. "Take a hard look at the infrastructure" needed to reach them, he said. "I'm not looking for a vendor. I'm looking for a partner."