



Procurement Times

Special Edition

A Quarterly Publication by the Enterprise Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) Acquisition Division

ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Feature Article Acquisitions Aren't Getting Any Easier...Or Are They?"	2
GWAC Employee Deployed Overseas	5
Alliant Contract Information	5
Alliant Training	5
Alliant Business Development Message Being Shared With Regional AAS	6
How To Achieve Competition	6
Alliant Stats	7
Event Highlights	7

Director's Corner

One of the growing trends in Federal acquisitions at the Task Order (TO) level is cost-type contracting and hybrid contracts (contracts containing fixed price (FP), time & material (T&M) and cost elements). One of the drivers behind this trend is T&M work increasingly scrutinized and the challenge of doing everything FP. The result is cost type contracts are growing, serving a bridge between T&M & FP type contracts.

The GSA Alliant GWAC allows for cost type contract (as well as FP & T&M) and serves as a nice alternative for IT solutions due to this flexibility.

This edition features an extensive interview with Jason Heddy, Branch C Manager & Senior Contracting Officer of the GSA, FAS, Southeast Sunbelt Region, on a very innovative acquisition methodology he conducted for a cost type contract in which he used his creativity and the flexibility of the Alliant GWAC to save time and money by streamlining the acquisition process and getting strong competition for a highly complex In-

formation Technology (IT) technical support requirement involving a variety of development and operational IT activities.

His efforts earned Jason a GSA Excellence in Acquisition award, which is one of GSA's highest awards for acquisition excellence.

Also included in this edition is an update on our very own Jason Schmitt, Contracting Officer and PCO of the Millennium GWAC. Jason is part of the Air National Guard and has been deployed overseas for the past several months serving as a United States Air Force Staff Sergeant called to duty overseas as part of the 379th Force Support Squadron, in the Middle East.

We are all extremely proud of Jason for his service and sacrifice for our country and miss him dearly. You'll see a nice photo on page 5 of Jason proudly showing off the 2011 Alliant Guide that appeared in Federal Computer Week (FCW) earlier this year. The role that Jason serves overseas, leading and assisting with Fallen Warrior



Casey Kelley, Director Enterprise Acquisition Division

Ceremonies, is nothing short of admirable and honorable. Some of his emails back home to us have touched us all and given us new perspectives on not just Jason's bravery, but the bravery of all men and women serving for us in our military. We look forward to Jason's safe return home later this year and to the safe return home of all the brave men and women that are serving our country overseas.

- Casey Kelley

Alliant.. Moving At The Speed of Technology



Jason Heddy

Branch C Manager & Senior Contracting Officer, GSA, FAS, Southeast Sunbelt Region

“Our requirement was for highly complex Information Technology technical support”

Featured Article

“Acquisitions Aren’t Getting Any Easier...Or Are They?” Interview with Senior Contracting Officer Jason C. Heddy

Introduction:

Recently one of the GSA Assisted Acquisition Service Contracting Officers found himself sitting between Martha Johnson, GSA Administrator, and Steven Kemp, FAS Commissioner, at the GSA Excellence in Acquisition awards ceremony receiving one of GSA’s highest awards for acquisition excellence and we wondered how using the Alliant GWAC helped him capture the excellence award.

Interview Questions:

Can you describe the acquisition you worked using Alliant?

Our requirement was for highly complex Information Technology (IT) technical support executing a variety of development and operational IT activities for the testing and development of a major weapons systems. The support included a wide variety of network engineering support, test and evaluation, security, software, database and computer systems development, project and configuration management, video teleconferencing, and operational test and evaluation support.

The acquisition was a recompetete of an existing task order issued under the legacy Millennia Lite GWAC. The incumbent was not an Alliant GWAC contract holder and therefore we anticipated a great deal of industry interest resulting in an intense competition and an incumbency transition.

How did you go about developing your evaluation criteria?

I believe the most powerful sentence in FAR 16.5 is found under FAR 16.505(b)(1)(ii) where it says, “the contracting officer may exercise broad discretion in developing appropriate order placement procedures.” When I conduct acquisition planning and collaborate with customers, I always focus the discussions regarding evaluations on identifying the key discriminators for successful contract performance. Once you have those discriminators identified in essence you have your evaluation criteria. In our case, those discriminators were numerous and highly technical. That posed a challenge.

It became overwhelmingly apparent that using a more traditional evaluation approach was going to be laborious on all parties, consume a great deal of valuable time, and be difficult in addressing all our discriminators. So we needed a new and innovative solution to drill straight down to what mattered. So I took the flexibilities built in to FAR 16.505 to heart and developed a multiphased evaluation process that I felt addressed our challenges.

How did your multiphase evaluation work?

In Phase I, which I coined a “Capability Demonstration (CD),” offerors would essentially sit for structured technical interview. It was open to all current Alliant primes and the entire scope of the requirement was on the table. During acquisition planning we had carefully prepared a number of questions tied to key technical discriminators. For each question we had also devel-

oped the framework that a strong response should include.

All CDs were done in person and very few restrictions were levied on the number of participants for any offeror. Our team wanted to hear directly from the technical experts of an offeror and the style of the presentation didn't matter. The offeror first saw the questions thirty (30) minutes before their scheduled demonstration. They managed their own allocated time and each event was recorded.

At the conclusion of the CDs, all the offerors were rated and given a "viable" or "non-viable" notice as detailed in our Request for Quote (RFQ). It essentially put each offeror on notice on their likelihood of being successful in winning the award. At this point, the technical portion of the evaluation was complete. After ten (10) CDs we issued three (3) "viable" and seven (7) "non-viable" notices.

Phase II, which consisted of price and past performance, was open again to all offerors who participated in Phase I. While this might sound like an advisory multistep process or a competitive range determination as defined in FAR 15, it was not. No one was excluded from continuing. It was simply designed as an opportunity for offerors to make a "business decision" as to how best to spend their precious bid and proposal dollars.

We had no idea what was going to happen. Were all the offerors going to submit Phase II packages or only the viable offerors? Sure enough...only those who were determined "viable" chose to proceed. Those that decided not to continue were offered debriefs at their request. We received the remaining Phase II submittals, conducted our final evaluations of those past performance and price, and made an award decision.

Did this strategy save you time?

It saved everyone time. From the contracting officer to the technical evaluation personnel to the offerors themselves, it truly was a successful streamlining initiative.

One of the hardest things we do as acquisition professionals is conduct evaluations. Many times customers who are assigned to a technical evaluation have rarely done it before. They may or may not have professional writing skills. Imagine reading through and adequately documenting an evaluation on what can often be hundreds of pages of documentation. Our interview style multiphased approach created an ability to cut right to the core of key technical discriminators. Information is proposed and evaluated right on the spot.

We conducted ten (10) CDs and documented the evaluations within nine (9) business days. It was an intense time, but it was also amazing to see how much time was saved by everyone. If we had required written technical proposals under a more traditional evaluation scheme with ten (10) offerors, the evaluation and documentation period in my opinion would have easily taken five (5) times that amount of time, if not longer.

How did industry respond to this type of approach?

Based on the feedback we received, industry truly found the process to be fair, innovative, and appreciated the focus on streamlining. The fact is in our current economy, companies have fewer and fewer dollars to spend pursuing new opportunities. The more time and money spent assembling quotes/proposals...the fewer opportunities a company can pursue. With an ever increasing push for more competition, we have to be sensitive to the financial limitations within industry. The amount of competition we receive on any acquisition and the cost for industry to compete on that same acquisition are inheritably intertwined.

Continued on page 4

“With an ever increasing push for more competition, we have to be sensitive to the financial limitations within industry.”

Interview with Senior Contracting Officer Jason C. Heddy—Continued

Is this a repeatable process?

Yes. In our office we've already employed this evaluation method on other Alliant acquisitions with similar success. Scale, complexity, or contract type of the requirement does not seem to be a factor. For example, in another acquisition the scale was much smaller, it was firm fixed price, and we used much fewer questions, but again we executed the evaluations in record time. In a similar manner as before, those that were deemed "non-viable" also opted not to continue.

Would you use a multiphased approach for all procurements under Alliant?

To me the real differentiator in choosing an evaluation method is the needs of the customer. Are they more comfortable with a traditional approach? Do they have the writing skills and experience with technical evaluations? Do they have the time? Do they want to review documentation? If so, then the answer is most likely to pursue a more traditional written approach. When I talk to people about this process I always encourage people to simply ask the customer a question...if I could provide you an opportunity to sit across from the offeror and ask them face-to-face a series of questions do you believe you could determine and evaluate accurately their capability to meet your requirement?

What are the problems and pitfalls of this process?

You have to do thorough acquisition planning and develop a keen level of trust and intimacy with your customer. The "upfront" work is the key to success or failure. The importance of identifying those key discriminators and of developing the questions cannot be understated. If a question is not going to separate one offeror from another...it's not worth asking. You also can't ask a question only one (I) offeror could possibly know the answer to. Additionally, the security of the questions is also paramount. If the questions are leaked, even inadvertently, it would destroy the integrity of the evaluation. Finally, a frank and honest debrief is essential. Offerors have to know why they were deemed "non-viable" in Phase I or why they lost in Phase II.

In summary, what are the best practices for conducting a multiphased procurement?

The single most important best practice is to have open, direct, and honest communication with industry and the customer. This evaluation practice brings everyone out from behind the security of their office or cubicle. It puts people face-to-face. I spent a great deal of time embedded with the customer developing the requirement and the questions. We held a couple different industry outreach events with the Alliant primes to explain the process and solicit feedback. While everyone was a bit outside their comfort zone, people knew exactly what to expect before the first demonstration began. That was essential to our success. In our business everything hinges on effective communication.

The Enterprise GWAC Division would like to thank Mr. Heddy for his time and effort in supporting this Special Edition of the Enterprise GWAC Procurement Times. With the continuous pressure on contracting officers to do more with less we believe the use of multiphased procurements can play a key role in acquiring complex IT services in less time and less money and ultimately be a win - win for all parties in the acquisition process. For more information on this article or multiphased acquisitions in general please contact Ms. Mimi Bruce, Director Client Support Enterprise GWAC Division at 925-735-1641 or Mr. John Cavadias GWAC Contracting Officer at 858-537-2261.

"The single most important best practice is to have open, direct, and honest communication with industry and the customer."

GWAC Employee Deployed Overseas

Our very own Enterprise Acquisition Division Senior Contracting Officer Jason Schmitt is proudly serving our country as a United States Air Force Staff Sergeant, called up to duty overseas as part of the 379th Force Support Squadron, at an undisclosed airbase in the Middle East. SSgt Jason, holding the Alliant Custom Report in this picture, will spend about six-months in the Middle East, and is expected back late October 2011.

Jason's presence is felt base-wide; to entail mortuary, recreational/fitness, and food service operations. He has led or assisted in 15 Fallen Warrior Ceremonies, rendering military honors to 35 Heroes that paid "The Ultimate Sacrifice" for their nation. Jason is involved throughout the squadron and has assisted with base morale events that supported over 10,000 Airmen, Sailors, Soldier, and Marines. He spearheaded a facility renovation that resulted in \$20K in facility interior/exterior upgrades.

Additionally, Jason's analytical thinking and "Go Green" approach to problem solving has led him to submit two energy efficient suggestions that will reduce government fraud waste and abuse. Jason is currently Night Shift Supervisor and Assistant Facility Manager. To highlight the sacrifice that our service members are experiencing, the base's average July temperature of 115 degrees is a true heat wave relative to what is experienced in the States. We wish Jason, and all service men and women a safe return.



SSgt Jason Schmitt & TSgt Corey Simmons

Alliant Contract Information



If you are interested in learning more about the Alliant GWAC Contract, please visit: www.gsa.gov/alliant. Everything you need to know can be found with a click of a button!

If you wish to speak to someone, you can contact our Client Support by dialing (877) 534-2208. Another way to reach out would be to send an email to the Alliant mailbox: alliant@gsa.gov

This is just an example of the many ways on how you can get in touch with us!

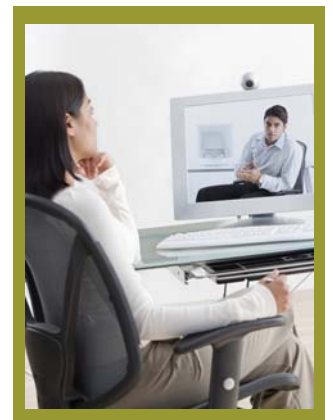
Alliant Training

Alliant Training is available for all Ordering Contracting Officers and procurement staff. Government personnel can either register for an upcoming webinar or request onsite training. GWAC Contractors should encourage their federal clients to attend this free GWAC training early in the procurement process.

Alliant and Alliant Small Business Delegation Procurement Authority Webinars:

- Held every Wednesday at 8:00 AM (Pacific Standard Time)
- To Register online: www.gsa.gov/events (look for Wednesday date)

If you are interested in hosting onsite training, please send email your request to alliant@gsa.gov.



Alliant Business Development Message Being Shared With Regional AAS



There are excellent reasons to engage in conversations with our industry partners beyond the context of an acquisition: to learn, to tutor, to share. These conversations are part of the collaborative mix which sustains partnerships.

There are times, while pursuing an acquisition that we create, an unnecessary, adversarial relationship between our contracting staff and our contractors. The Federal procurement environment is only going to be enhanced by mutual understanding, and by creating a “win-win” focus and open dialogue with industry. This is called partnership and partnership works in procurement.

Partnership can work beyond procurement. It's suggested that we expand the partnership concept by considering our contractors to be our ambassadors to customers, extensions of our marketing teams. Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) travel dollars are diminishing and our program resources are declining, but our contractors can still reach customers and carry the message of the benefits of utilizing FAS offerings. Please take time and meet with our corporate partners when they call. Please take advantage of every meeting with industry and enrich the opportunity not only to learn but also to tutor contractors in new Federal acquisition policies (such as, preference for mul-

iple award BPAs), tools FAS has in place for customers (for example, statements of work library, SOW reviews, templates...), useful websites (such as, interact.gsa.gov) and many more! Every industry meeting should be a rich information exchange. Take a few extra moments at each vendor meeting and share your FAS knowledge.

Industry wants us to succeed in the business at hand. And, we want our corporate partners to flourish under our programs. What we have in common is our customer. Let's reach that customer together by shared knowledge.

- Jim Lilac

“There are many ways to promote competition.”

How to Achieve Competition

The Contracting Officer shall make all efforts to remove any barriers that prevent competition. There are many ways to promote competition. It is in the best interest of Government to have adequate competition. Competition can be achieved when we do the following to promote it:

1. Have a continuous and open dialogue with the prospective contractors at the initial phase during pre-solicitation briefings, Question & Answers, Request For Information, etc..
2. Provide a clear written Statement of Work and set realistic expectations.
3. Understanding risks and rewards from a contractor's view point.
4. Provide details of the current environment/situation of the acquisition and historical information if available.
5. Allow adequate timeline for quality proposal submission - short turnaround does not work well.

There are many ways to promote competition. Some key points are identified above. For your use, the Alliant website offers a full array of competitive samples of Statements of Work that support the Federal Enterprise Architecture and DOD Enterprise Architecture.

- Diemle Phan

Alliant STATS (as of August 2011)

Top Ten Agencies Using Alliant:

1. Department of State
2. Department of Homeland Security
3. Department of the Air Force
4. Department of the Army
5. Department of Agriculture
6. Department of the Navy
7. Department of Justice
8. U.S. Security Exchange Commission
9. Department of Veteran Affairs
10. Department of Interior

	Total Orders Issued	Total Estimated Dollars
GSA Assisted Services	86	\$ 4,279,825,501
Direct Order Direct Bill	73	\$ 3,108,644,804
Totals:	159	\$ 7,388,470,306

Event Highlights

• GSA Expo - Training and Alliant Shared Interest Group Meeting

The Enterprise Acquisition Division was very busy at GSA Expo this year by providing multiple training sessions and holding it's first face-to-face Alliant Shared Interest Group (SIG) Meeting during the week of May 9th.

Training consisted of five sessions which incorporated the gamut from Alliant and Alliant Small Business Overviews to Delegation Training to an understanding of GWACs and Schedules. We estimate that we had over 150 attendees for all five sessions. We received great feedback on the Alliant and Alliant Small Business presentation which incorporated not only the contracting aspects of these vehicles but the unique FEA/DODEA IT perspective that is specific to Alliant and Alliant Small Business.



The Alliant SIG Meeting consisted of various speakers including Mary Davie, GSA FAS ITS Assistant Commissioner; Larry Hale, GSA FAS ITS Director, Office of Infrastructure Optimization; Michael Gelber, GSA FAS R9 Regional Commissioner; Kenton Raiford, GSA FAS R9 Director, Assisted Acquisition Services (AAS) ; Debra Wells, Pacific Team, GSA FAS R9 Branch Manager of AAS; and Jim Ghiloni, GSA FAS AAS Director of Business and Acquisition Operations. Topics included a myth buster panel session with GSA leadership folks that spoke about "The Top Ten Things Industry Doesn't Know About GSA". The interaction that took place between GSA and Alliant primes for the half day event proved to be priceless!

• Alliant Outreach, Fort Worth, TX

The Enterprise Acquisition Division along with the GSA FAS Region 7 AAS & CAR hosted the Alliant Outreach on June 8th at the Norris Conference Center in Fort Worth, TX. The Outreach included Sylvia Hernandez, Director, Assisted Acquisition Services, and her team; Paulette Sepulvado, Branch Chief of Operations, Customer Accounts and Research and the entire CAR team; and Jill LaDuca, Director of Acquisition Operations Division (AOD) and her entire AOD team. This is the first Alliant Outreach where we had well over 40 GSA Region AAS / CAR representatives attend. It was a great opportunity for Alliant primes to gain insight on a customer (GSA AAS Region 7) that has been a strong supporter of Alliant thus far and is interested in collaborating with industry on doing business together.



- Jennifer Jeans

Enterprise GWAC Acquisition Division

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Upcoming Events

Air Force IT Conference

Montgomery, AL
August 29-31, 2011

ACT/IAC Execu- tive Leadership Conference

Williamsburg, VA
October 23-25, 2011

Contract Websites:

- **Alliant**— www.gsa.gov/alliant
- **ANSWER**— www.gsa.gov/answer
- **Millennia**— www.gsa.gov/millennia

We Want Your Feedback



The Enterprise Newsletter has been a tradition since the inception of the ANSWER Contract. We believe the Procurement Times newsletter adds value by providing Government and Industry insight into current Alliant trends, activities, and key noteworthy accomplishments. We want this newsletter to be of value to you so we are asking for your input. What do you like? What would you like to see more of or less of? Any other

comments that you believe may add value to future newsletters?

Please submit your comments to jennifer.jeans@gsa.gov