

## JUSTIFICATION AND APPROVAL

### Justification for Other Than Full and Open Competition (FAR 6.3)

**1. Contracting Agency and Activity.** The Department of the Interior, United States Geological Survey, Office of Acquisition and Grants – Headquarters Office, plans to contract by means other than full and open competition. This document sets forth the justification and approval for use of one of the exceptions to full and open competition allowed under the Competition in Contracting Act (CICA) of 1984.

**2. Nature of Action Being Approved.** Sole Source, Firm Fixed Price Contract. Period of performance: July 2012 – July 2013 with two additional option years (2013 – 2015).

**3. Description of Supplies or Services.** The development of the National Vegetation Classification Standard is a core activity of the Core Science Analytics and Synthesis Program. The need for the products described below have been identified by multiple partner agencies, including the Federal Geographic Data Committee, as well state management agencies reliant on biological information for their planning process. Specifically, the Core Science Analytics and Synthesis Program in working with the Forest Service, Ecological Society of America, and others has prioritized the implementation of the National Vegetation Classification and specifically identified this task as a key step in that implementation.

**4. Estimated Dollar Value.** Fiscal Year 2012 – [REDACTED] Total funding - [REDACTED]

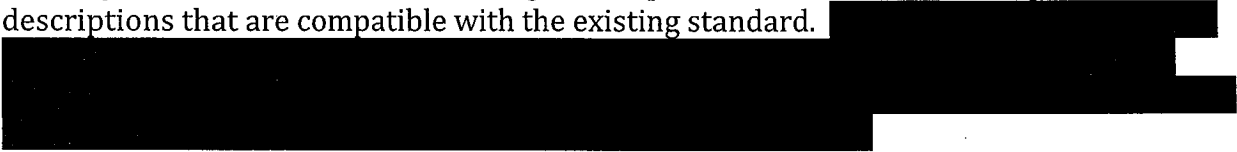
**5. Statutory Authority.** Executive agencies are authorized, under certain conditions, to contract for goods and services without providing for full and open competition (41 U.S.C. 253(c)(1). Subpart 6.3., Section 6.302-1 of the Federal Acquisition Regulations provides the circumstances for less than full and open competition when only one responsible source and no other supplies or services will satisfy the agency requirements.

The limitation that is cited on this circumstance is that the contracts awarded using this authority shall be supported by a written justification and approvals described in Sections 6.303 and 6.304, respectively. The justification for less than full and open competition is discussed in the section below.

#### **6. Rationale Supporting Use of Citation in No. 5.**

NatureServe is an established scientific organization with a long history of developing and maintaining biological information and data systems. NatureServe staff has participated in the development of both the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) since its inception and has worked with their network of state heritage program ecologist to create the types

that are to be revised. NatureServe is the only organization that currently maintains a vegetation classification database consistent with the U.S. NVC. Their ecologists were responsible for developing the Alliance Type descriptions in that system and are therefore uniquely qualified to provide the support requested. The databases owned and maintained by NatureServe are proprietary, including Biotics where the alliance type descriptions are maintained, making them the sole provider of much of the information necessary to complete the National Vegetation Classification System, specifically the attributes required to complete the template for each of the alliance descriptions. No other organization maintains and has access to the legacy data necessary to complete this task efficiently. Creating the alliance concepts and full descriptions without access to the supporting databases and the expertise would require considerable work in compiling existing information, building a relational database to house the NVC, and would require eliciting feedback and reviews from regional experts in order to draft concepts and descriptions that are compatible with the existing standard.



#### **7. Other Information.**

A Statement of Work for full and open competition for these services was not developed because the work requested requires access to data maintained in NatureServe's Biotics database and the alliance level data content of that database are required to implement this task. A full and open competition is not feasible because the detailed content maintained in the database is not publically available.

#### **8. The Efforts to Identify Additional Sources Including the Market Research Conducted.**

It is essential that the work proposed here be done to provide stakeholders in natural resource inventory and monitoring activities with the detailed information, methods, and access to data generated by state and regional ecologists over the past two decades. NatureServe is the sole vendor that can provide comprehensive access to the network of ecologists and the information they provide. The Federal Geographic Data Committee - Vegetation Subcommittee and the Ecological Society of America Panel on Vegetation Classification recognize NatureServe as the authority with respect to this content. They are the only vendor with the data, database of alliance descriptions, and the vegetation classification expertise necessary to complete the alliance level revision at a national extent.

#### **9. Future Plans to Permit Competition.**

This procurement is one-time requirement. Once complete the databases and data developed under this contract will be housed and supported by the USGS, making it accessible to all potential users equally.

