



U.S. General Services Administration

Federal Acquisition Service



Networkx Best Practices: Creating a Statement of Work

Agencies preparing to use the Networkx contracts to serve their telecommunications and networking needs must execute a Fair Opportunity decision process to choose a contractor before placing orders. GSA has described two generic processes: a standard process and, as needed, a statement of work (SOW) process. Both of these are described in more detail in the *General Services Administration (GSA) Networkx Fair Opportunity and SOW Guide*, which can be found at www.gsa.gov/networkx, along with many other resources and tools.

This document is intended to supplement the information and resources already provided to assist agencies in the preparation of SOWs. Specifically, it provides a sample outline that incorporates all of the required data elements of an SOW, along with practical suggestions gleaned from early program experience. These suggestions reflect best practices to help agencies prepare SOWs in a manner that facilitates SOW generation, scope determination, contractor response, and proposal evaluation. Since agency needs vary widely, this document will not cover all possible or appropriate variations in SOW structure or content. It is offered as guidance to be adapted as necessary to meet agency needs. However, agencies applying the principles and best practices found in this document can expect to see a significant reduction in the time required to complete a Fair Opportunity decision using an SOW.

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General Principles

Agencies preparing an SOW are urged to bear in mind that the Networx contracts were designed to be used by any agency “as is” to achieve best value. They were negotiated to reflect government-wide requirements, best commercial practices, operations manageability, and best available prices. Because of this, agencies adhering to the following principles should expect to receive higher quality, easier to evaluate contractor proposals, and to achieve best value use of the contracts in the shortest possible time.

Networx Best Practices	
<p><i>Use the contracts as written whenever possible</i></p>	<p>Avoid modifications that do not add real value, or that create an opportunity to increase prices. The contract structure explicitly supports tailoring of services to meet agency-specific needs, either through agency-specific pricing of Individual Case Basis (ICB) Contract Line Item Numbers (CLINs) or the modification of the contracts to include new CLINs. Note that the latter requires additional effort by the contractors for proposal preparation, as well as additional effort by both the contractor (e.g., changes to ordering, billing and operations support systems) and GSA (e.g., evaluation of contract modification, and updates to the contract, Pricer tool, and billing system) after SOW award. The time needed to modify a contract to add new CLINs can delay the start of ordering.</p>
<p><i>Express requirements using Networx terminology</i></p>	<p>The Networx contracts use generic terminology to ensure uniform service quality and facilitate comparisons between offerors on a like-for-like basis. Current agency inventories or planning documents may use other terminology, e.g., FTS2001, commercial brand names, etc. Time spent in converting requirements into Networx terminology will be returned in faster proposal generation and evaluation as well as easier program startup and operations. Using non-Networx terminology, especially commercial brand names, results in more contractor effort and time, and creates the possibility that a contractor can add an existing service to the contract under a different name at a higher price</p>
<p><i>Do not seek agency-specific pricing of existing CLINs</i></p>	<p>With few exceptions, Networx prices are significantly below the best available commercial or government prices. Since all Networx prices have been negotiated based on the aggregated buying power of the entire government, it is not necessary to issue a Networx SOW just to obtain excellent prices. Networx contract terms also require the contractors to maintain prices at best available levels, and allow any contractor to reduce any CLIN price at any time, with the lower price available to any agency having the same requirement. However, Networx contractors are allowed to waive any CLIN charge at any time for any individual agency. Therefore, do not seek agency-specific pricing of CLINs, nor bottom line percentage discounts at the project level. Rather, expect the contractors to either reduce CLIN prices for all contract users, or to waive charges in agency-specific cases.</p>
<p><i>Use the power of Networx Management and Operations requirements</i></p>	<p>Networx contractors are required to provide extensive management reporting and data, and to provide performance and usage monitoring, at no additional charge. Avoid requirements that can result in paying a Networx contractor to produce the same result by other means or paying another contractor to duplicate the no-charge Networx requirements.</p>

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Best Practice

Use of a numbered outline structure and numbered requirements in the SOW will facilitate subsequent communications with the contractors.

1 Project Overview

1.1 Title

Provide a short, descriptive title of the project to be executed.

1.2 Background

Provide a brief description/summary of the project and the services sought from the Network contractor. Describe the services provided by the current network and/or contractors.

Describe strategic direction and objectives for the solution sought by the agency, e.g., what is the main objective for the migration of services, what emerging services are envisioned to be supported by the solution sought, etc. Information provided should be clear and concise.

Best Practice

Help the contractor to understand the initial context and future implications of the order, e.g., “This project will replace the current data-only IP-VPN. Subsequent expansions of the network will be used to absorb and consolidate the agency’s remaining ATM networks and long distance voice traffic.”

1.3 Acquisition Selected

State whether the SOW is issued against the Network Universal or the Network Enterprise acquisition program.

Best Practice

Include the reason for selecting one or the other in the acquisition record. It does not need to be listed in the SOW.

1.4 Fair Opportunity Exception (if applicable)

If the SOW is being released under an exception to Fair Opportunity, state the exception that applies to the services defined in the SOW.

Document the rationale for any Fair Opportunity exception in the acquisition record.

2 Specific Tasks and/or Services

Provide a descriptive summary of the tasks and services required. For less complex projects with limited tailoring of requirements or straightforward use of existing ICB CLINs, the summary should be brief. For more complex projects requiring significant analysis on the part of the contractor, the summary should provide sufficient detail to allow the contractor to understand the full scope of the project. If the contractor is expected or invited to identify alternative services and CLINs to be used or created, state that here.

State any requirements for plans or contractor-provided information that will be needed for the Fair Opportunity decision, e.g., “The contractor shall provide a draft Transition Plan addressing all locations specified in Section 3 of this document” or “The contractor shall provide an architectural overview of the solution proposed.”

Best Practice

For complex projects with significant functional requirements not directly addressed by standard Networkx services and CLINs, provide an attachment describing the goals and functional requirements of the project in sufficient detail to allow the contractor to identify and price the capabilities needed.

2.1 Service Requirements

List required services and features, both on contract and priced (fixed price) and on contract and not priced (ICB), e.g., “The contractor shall provide the following services with the features and options indicated in accordance with the requirements found in the corresponding Networkx contract section.”

Best Practice

Provide a list or table using the Networkx service name(s) and any associated features and/or options, with the contract section number reference. Do not repeat text from the contract or provide additional descriptive text.

2.2 Agency-Specific Service Requirements

If agency-specific services or requirements are needed, provide the additional requirements to be satisfied.

Provide sufficient detail to allow contractors to price the requirements, focusing on those aspects that differ from the standard Networkx capabilities.

For existing ICB CLINs, provide the specific parameters that will allow the contractor to establish a price, e.g., location, performance level, etc.

For new capabilities, provide the technical, operational or other requirements to be satisfied. Where possible, relate the new requirements to the existing Networkx capabilities with appropriate references.

Best Practice

For new services required, use the requirements structure(s) found in Section C.2 of the Networkx contracts to the maximum extent possible.

DO NOT specify head counts, labor categories, or personnel labor hours to be priced, as these are not supported in the Networkx contracts. Rather, use the fixed price mechanisms provided in the contracts, e.g., in the Customer Specific Design and Engineering Service.

2.3 Performance Measures

Identify metrics and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to be used to assess quality of service delivery based on Networkx contract specified performance measures or others as needed. If standard Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and SLAs will be used, a simple statement to that effect should be provided. If ICB performance measures will be used, e.g., critical level KPIs, provide sufficient information to allow the contractor to price the corresponding CLIN. If new KPIs or SLAs are required, provide sufficient detail to allow the contractor to understand and price them.

Best Practice

Use the KPIs and SLAs specified in the contracts unless absolutely necessary. Less stringent performance standards may not cost less, and more stringent or different standards will generally cost more.

2.4 Government-Furnished Equipment and Information

Identify the government-furnished equipment and information, if any, to be provided to the contractor and identify any limitations on use. Be as specific as possible.

Indicate interoperability requirements as needed.

3 Place of Performance

Specify the services that will be provided at the contractor's site(s).

Specify the services that will be provided at government sites. Provide a complete list of sites to be served and the initial bandwidth required at each site. If the service mix or characteristics will vary by site, also indicate which services, features, options, performance levels, etc. will be required at which sites.

Best Practice

Provide a list or table of building addresses with required bandwidth and services. Include any exceptions and/or priorities, e.g., desired order of transition.

4 Period of Performance

State the start date for the period of performance (POP) in terms of total calendar days after award for services requested. If the POP is expected to be coincident with that of the Networkx contract, say so. If the POP will be shorter, specify the expected end date. Note that the end date may not extend beyond the end date of the Networkx contract, but that the agency may choose to discontinue service at any time without penalty.

5 Pricing CLINs and Tables

For defined Networkx services previously listed (see Section 2.1, above), provide the corresponding contract B-Table references or instruct the contractor to provide price information using the B-Table corresponding to the listed services.

For new services, features or capabilities, either provide or instruct the contractor to provide pricing information consistent with the structure and content of existing Networkx B-Tables. In some cases (e.g., a new feature) this may involve modification of an existing price table. In other cases (e.g., a new agency-specific service) this may involve creation of a new price table.

Best Practice

Use Networkx price table structures and CLINs to the maximum extent possible. This will facilitate evaluation and subsequent contract modifications and tool/support system updates.

Best Practice

Specifying building addresses rather than serving wire centers (SWCs) for pricing of access will result in the lowest possible prices. The Networkx contracts allow for exception pricing at the building level that may be lower than the pricing offered at the corresponding SWC.

5.1 Bid Model

If total cost of the contractor's proposal is a factor in the Fair Opportunity decision, provide a clear bid model indicating the basis for calculating total cost, including:

- ✎ Site locations (addresses if available) and bandwidth/service requirements; this may be the same as the list included in Section 3, above, and included by reference
- ✎ Projected annual usage volumes/bandwidth needs for evaluation purposes (network-wide, by site, or point-to-point, as appropriate), including features, for the life of the resulting order. Note that specifying point-to-point traffic for locations or regions outside of the continental United States will permit the contractor to price more accurately.

Best Practice

Provide the bid model in a form that the contractor can populate and submit.

6 Instructions to Offerors

Provide instructions to guide the contractors in preparing proposals. Contractors may be instructed to submit proposals or information in a specific format (or severable parts) to facilitate evaluation. The instructions may specify further organization of proposal or response parts, such as Price, Management, Technical, etc. Also include agency contact information and proposal delivery instructions in this section.

If contractor presentations or negotiations are expected, describe here, including schedule, location, content, format and any other information as needed. (See FAR 15-204.5)

7 Evaluation Plan

Present sufficient high level information to allow the contractor to understand the basis for making the Fair Opportunity decision. Provide schedule information as appropriate, e.g., "Contractor selection will be made approximately xx days after receipt of proposals."

Specify the factors—technical, management, past performance, price, other—that will be used to evaluate contractor proposals. State the importance of price relative to the other factors. It is not necessary to provide specific details of the evaluation process.

Best Practice

Include a fully documented evaluation plan in the acquisition record, including the internal process that will be followed, the method(s) used to assign value ratings to contractor proposals, and the individual(s) making the decision.

8 Attachments

Include any attachments that are part of the Acquisition Package (lists of locations, network diagrams, etc.) that would be of use to the contractors in formulating their response.