QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES
From the Industry Day held on December 10, 2012

DISCLAIMER ANNOUNCED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING AND APPLICABLE TO THESE QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES: All acquisition-related information contained in the presentations and in the responses is subject to change. You must follow the written Request for Proposal when issued. Any conflict between what you see in the Industry Day documentation and the Request for Proposal will be resolved in favor of the final Request for Proposal.

Question: To bid on one Domain, will you have to bid on all five Domains?
> Response: You do not have to bid on all five Domains. You may submit proposals on one or more Domains; there must be a separate proposal for each Domain.

Question: Please clarify why Pro-Tech is not about "development, information technology or products?" Do you have onsite staff performing these activities?
> Response: Pro-Tech is focused on professional and technical services only. NOAA has separate vehicles for development and information technology, and they require different skill sets. Products will not be purchased through the Pro-Tech program.

Question: Would you consider a longer period of performance to service some of the larger opportunities in Fisheries, Oceans, Weather and Satellites? Current periods of performance do not synchronize with Pro-Tech schedule.
> Response: We anticipate a period of performance not more than five years. Based upon feedback from Industry it is tough enough for Industry to plan for pricing and rate structures for five years.

Question: Will the ordering period and the period of performance be for five years? Will a task order awarded in the 4th year have a period of performance of one year only?
> Response: Yes. The last option period will have a period of performance anticipated to be one year.

Question: Will there be any awards that serve multiple Domains?
> Response: No, awards will be made to specific Domains; there is a distinction between Domains. You can get awards in multiple Domains.

Question: What is the difference in scope between the already awarded Sci-Tech contract and Pro-Tech? It doesn't seem to be very different at its basic stated requirements.
> Response: Sci-Tech was for NESDIS, and is used on a non-mandatory basis. Those services will gradually be moved over time to Pro-Tech. No contract will be terminated solely as a result of Pro-Tech awards.

Question: Please explain in more detail how you envision multiple awards in each of the five domains to work? Will multiple proposals be required?
> Response: Multiple proposals will be required if you intend to propose for multiple Domains. Each Domain will require a separate proposal, you have to propose and win a contract for working in the Domain. As an example, if we decide to make five awards per Domains, there are three options: all five firms will have fair opportunity to compete; we will follow the Rule of Two; or the requirement will be set-aside to small business only.

Question: Obviously the decision to require NOAA units to use Pro-Tech as first option versus no requirement to use is a very big deal to bidders' interest. If not a first choice for use, Pro-Tech is a limited target. We recommend Pro-Tech be first choice vehicle.
> Response: Our intention is to make Pro-Tech mandatory; however, our first interest is that our client needs are met.

Question: Is there consideration to having parts of Pro-Tech set aside for certain business groups, i.e., women-owned, HUBZone, 8(a) etc.
> Response: Not at this time.

Question: Procurement strategy greatly effects teaming decisions. Will NOAA disclose the strategy prior to release of the RFP?

Response: We will consider this.

Question: Will draft Sections L and M be released prior to final RFP? Will procurement strategy (full and open, small business set asides etc.) be announced prior to the final RFP. Consider the enormous impact this has on teaming.

Response: We will consider this.

Question: Is this an on-site staffing contract only or will consulting services also be allowed to occur off-site or in contractor locations and offices?

Response: We were planning for on-site only, but will consider off-site also at your request.

Question: Will the government consider requiring the Organization Conflict of Interest (OCI) Plan in advance of the proposal due date?

Response: The RFI states that we will require the OCI Plan to be submitted with the proposal. There is no plan to change this requirement. However, if you are aware of an actual, potential or apparent OCI and intend to submit a proposal, you may contact the Contracting Officer prior to submitting a proposal to advise him of the OCI.

Question: Will the OGC office be reviewing the OCI Plans? There have been problems in the past on other proposals with OCI Plans (not necessarily with NOAA) that the technical evaluators and contracting officers evaluate the plans which do not match up well with the directions in the RFP, causing additional time and resources to answer questions with regard to the OCI Plan proposed.

Response: We work closely with the Agency General Counsel on this procurement and expect to work closely in the future as well.

Question: Regarding academia and partnering and teaming. E.g., Will NOAA allow teams to be made up with partners between industry and universities?

Response: Yes…we see no reason why not.

Question: Please address any scope overlap between the current OPSTech and NOAALink contracts and Pro-Tech.

Response: NOAALink is strictly for IT Support; Pro-Tech excludes IT requirements. There may be an overlap in requirements between OPSTech and Pro-Tech; however, no contract will be terminated; we may not exercise options. We will review each request on a case-by-case basis. We are aware of the time and effort contractors have spent to win contracts.

Question: Will the Pro-Tech RFP be limited solely to on-site personnel; or could it also be used to include temporary deployments of specialized research crews and their research equipment/vessels?

Response: We initially decided to have only on-site personnel, however, we agree we need to have flexibility on the use of on-site and off-site personnel, and will revisit this issue and try not to be stringent.

Question: Regarding lack of space in government facilities—how can new contractors bid successfully with incumbent contractors in place?

Response: We will find space for new contractors, work comes first. If you win you will be able to perform.

Question: How would two different Domains use this contract? E.g., Fisheries and Oceans both have overlapping and blended workforces.

Response: NOAA mission involves a certain degree of overlap between line offices. NOAA will review the task order requirement to determine which Domain is the best fit.

Question: Are remote aerial sensing platforms for exploitation considered in scope under Pro-Tech?

Response: Not sure what aerial sensing platforms are; if it is a product, it is not under the scope of Pro-Tech. If it is a professional or technical service it is within scope.

Question: Will the government consider reducing the number of Domains so as to reduce the number of proposals and the number of contracts?
> Response: No. The Domains have been reduced to the minimum. Awards in each Domain are designed to provide the right balance using available resources and having enough qualified suppliers. We need a robust supplier base for each Domain—we struggle to achieve the talent needed for staffing. Functional separation is not serving our needs.

Question: Will there be any IT requirements in Pro-Tech?
> Response: No.

Question: What is the new timeline for the solicitation?
> Response: We will try to issue the RFP in March 2013.

Question: Will there be an "Enterprise Research Domain" for R&D?
> Response: No. Enterprise Operations Systems will cover services such as: Finance; Budget; Human Resources; Conference Planning; Facilitation; Facilities Management; etc. The other four Domains will contain their own R&D requirements.

Question: Will there be a separate set-aside for 8(a) and/or HUBZone companies?
> Response: Probably not.

Question: Will there be another round of RFIs?
> Response: We do not have any more RFIs planned.

Question: Will there be five RFPs?
> Response: No, only one RFP.

Question: Will they all be due on the same day?
> Response: One proposal per Domain, all submitted at the same day/time.

Question: Will there be separate NAICS codes for each Domain?
> Response: Yes

Question: What about existing contracts? Will they be continued or folded up under Pro-Tech?
> Response: Existing contracts will continue, no contract will be terminated on account of Pro-Tech awards, however, options may not be exercised. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Question: Are Pro-Tech new or current requirements?
> Response: It includes both current and new requirements.

Question: Is there a current "forecast to industry" of opportunities by Domain?
> Response: We put industry forecasts on the NOAA web site, and they will identify with their own individual Domains. We do not have a dollar amount by Domain.

Question: Will Small Businesses be required to provide Past Performance information?
> Response: Yes.

Question: Why isn't OPSTech a viable vehicle?
> Response: OPSTech is a viable vehicle however, the ceiling is low compared to Pro-Tech. The current ceiling on OPSTech is $140M.

Question: Will there be separate solicitations for each Domain?
> Response: No. There is one solicitation for all Domains. Offerors may bid on one or more Domains but must submit a full separate proposal for each Domain.

Question: If there are five "lots" how does NOAA evaluate with consistency?
> Response: All evaluation factors are anticipated to be the same for all five Domains. All ratings for each section are the same for all five Domains. It is unlikely to have across the board solutions for all Domains.

Question: (Follow-up) What about comparing proposals across Domains for things like "capacity", e.g., Fisheries and Oceans both have "coral reefs" as part of their Domain.
> Response: We will not compare proposals across Domains, except for responsibility concerns (ie: capacity).

Question: May a company bid as Prime on one Domain and Subcontract on another?
> Response: Yes.

Question: What about "cost type" contracts with regard to small companies who do not have a CAS compliant cost accounting system?
> Response: Certain Domains may require more cost reimbursable activity than others. A Job Cost Accounting System has the ability to track cost to improve efficiency, monitoring and control.

Question: (Follow-up) With regard to the number of task orders by type per Domain, what is NOAA's expectations with regard to the number of TO that deal with these contracts?
> Response: Probably a 100 task orders per year or more. Current usage is about 25 orders in one Line Office this year; another Domain is about the same. These were mostly T&M and FFP orders.

Question: Do you see small businesses bidding as prime?
> Response: Yes.

Question: (Follow-up) Are we saying, based on the math, that there will be $100M to $200M per year, per Domain? Also (part 2 of this same follow-up), Will you have small businesses bid in the same format as large businesses?
> Response: Yes…small businesses have to follow the same process in their proposals as the large businesses. It is a challenge but SBA says that it is possible for small business to bid on large dollar task orders, small businesses do this all the time. SBA believes this is an economic model that works and incrementally grows small business.

Question: Will the sample task be real? Seeing a "sample task" does not allow the offeror to look at a "real problem" and be innovative with its response. What is the purpose?
> Response: We prefer "real tasks" rather than "sample tasks" We will take a hard look at this. The current problem we have is the ability of contractors to recruit and retain high quality personnel. Pro-Tech is not intended to be a race to the bottom or Lowest Price Technically Acceptable. We are interested in savings and obtaining good prices but not at the expense of quality performance and skill level.

Question: Will there be one NAICS code for each Domain?
> Response: Yes.

Question: (Follow-up) is it possible to have research and development NAICS codes for the Domains? For example, Office of Atmospheric Research (OAR) would have NAICS codes with a size standard of 500 employees.
> Response: The R&D requirements are integrated into the line office Domains due to the integrated nature of the office mission. We will look at that again.

Question: Would a Joint Venture among several small companies be accepted?
> Response: Yes, as permitted by the Contracting Officer within the guidance of FAR Part 9.