NOAALink User's Quarterly

Service. Partnership. Commitment.
Where Business and IT Connect.

Recognizing that the NOAALink Program introduces new processes and responsibilities for many of you, this edition of the NOAALink Quarterly Newsletter concentrates on information and tips designed to make your NOAALink interactions go smoothly. The NOAALink Program Office (PO) is committed to helping you get your IT requirements completed and move your mission forward in lockstep with the broader Federal mission of smarter IT.

Many of the items below were raised in discussions with stakeholders, and there are likely other people in the NOAALink community who will benefit from this information, so thank you for being engaged! Solid understanding of the NOAALink process and continuing dialogue will be increasingly important as the PO initiates new strategic IT opportunities across NOAA and DOC. The agency and the department will get the most out of NOAALink through its methods for finding and orchestrating opportunities to streamline and collaborate on common IT requirements.

Working together with IT professionals at NOAA, NOAALink has made progress enhancing enterprise-wide strategic IT planning and management. By standardizing and aligning requirements for products and services where it makes sense, the program has already helped NOAA IT become more efficient and effective.

> **MAXIMUM VISIBILITY**
>
> At the heart of the NOAALink mission is capturing opportunities. Visibility into the IT project pipeline and Line/Staff Office requirements makes it possible for NOAALink to coordinate efforts and find the types of IT needs that could be consolidated for efficiency. For that reason, NOAALink must be used by all NOAA Line/Staff Offices for their IT needs and is available to other Department of Commerce (DOC) bureaus to meet their technology, contracting and financial goals.

TIPS & TRICKS

Remember To Keep Time On Your Side

While often perceived as sources of stress, timelines and deadlines help ensure customer expectations are met, so be mindful of appropriate Procurement Administrative Lead Times (PALT) for your requirements. Assuming receipt of a properly prepared, fully documented requisition, including any applicable clearances and approvals, you should provide, at a minimum, the standard lead times published in the DOC Acquisition Manual. For more information about DOC acquisition management and to access the manual, visit the DOC Acquisition Management webpage.

In addition, FY12 acquisition cutoff dates that affect most NOAALink requirements are fast approaching. In order to meet the acquisition deadlines, you must have your requirements to the NOAALink Program Office (NPO) by Monday, July 2, 2012. All administrative or funding modifications should be submitted to NPO by August 15. Any requisition submitted after AGO cutoff dates must go through the late acquisition process, which can be found on the AGO website.

Powerful Knowledge Through Training

The NOAALink Program Office has held 10 NOAALink 101 training sessions so far in FY12, giving 208 users a solid understanding of the NOAALink process. The NPO offers training on:

- Pre-award process for those who will be involved in completing a NOAALink request submission

- Post-award process for those who will assume the Task Manager role of monitoring all technical aspects of the contract and assisting in contract administration

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in NOAALink 101 training! For those who may have missed or not had the opportunity to attend training, refer to the Training page on the NOAALink website. You will find training materials, questions and answers from some of the previous sessions and the training schedule.

For the rest of FY12, we will be scheduling monthly training sessions, so check the website regularly for updates. As we move into FY13, we will book additional sessions as needed.

Track The Status Of Your Request

Once you complete your requisition in C.Request, attach your NOAALink Worksheet and other supporting documents required and route your submission to NPO for review, NPO will notify you within two business days whether your requirements are in scope for NOAALink. If your requirement is in scope, it will be reviewed for funding availability and accounting validation. If approved, your request will be forwarded back to you, at which point you will commit and submit your requisition to NLK. If you have questions about your request up to this stage, contact NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov.

After you submit to NLK, use the sources below to track the status of your request:

- C.Request – Refer to the system to get basic information about the progress of your request. Also, verify your notification settings in C.Request so you receive emails from the system about status changes.

- Line/Staff Office Liaisons – NOAALink liaisons within your Line/Staff Office receive a daily acquisition work-in-process (WIP) report.

- NOAA Acquisitions and Grants Office (AGO) – If you require further details regarding the status of your request, contact the Contract Specialist assigned to your requisition listed under Agent Name in the system or on the report. As a back-up, you may also contact Michael Iszard (michael.iszard@noaa.gov).

Tend To The Property Process

Among the many responsibilities Task Managers carry is to notify the appropriate property custodian of hardware and software items. Task Managers must manage the receipt of goods or delivery of the license key and provide the property custodian all necessary documentation. This documentation includes a copy of the original award, a copy of any modifications, and a copy of the invoice.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NOAALink has been in place for more than a year now, so it's likely that your questions may have already been answered. Here's our list of top frequently asked questions (FAQs):

Q: Can direct quotes be requested for HW and SW requirements that have very specific components?

A: No, if you are unable to make estimations based off of publicly available information, use historical data. Obtaining direct quotes is prohibited as it leads to:

- The request being registered with the manufacturer, meaning that initiation of the requirement will no longer be a competitive process. Fair opportunity cannot be given to all of the firms in this scenario because one firm will have an advantage, compromising the ability of other firms to be competitive.

- The contractor may not be appropriate according to the socioeconomic goals of the Department or the contract types designed by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

- Higher overall cost to the end user.

You must refer to public sources for cost estimates. Refer to AGO's guidance on conducting Market Research in the NOAA Acquisition Process Guide. If you find that this information does not provide you with strategies appropriate to your specific acquisition, you may contact Mary Anne Young directly for further assistance, mary.a.young@noaa.gov.

Q: How do I submit requests for Administrative Modifications (MODs)?

A: Please follow the standard NOAALink request process by completing a NOAALink Worksheet and routing your C.Request to the NOAALink Program Office (NPO) for approval. Please note Administrative MODs with changes to funding will be assessed the 3% NOAALink fee. Detailed instructions on the standard NOAALink request process can be found on the Submitting Your Requirement page of the NOAALink website. Feel free to contact us at NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov if you require any further assistance.

Q: We have a current contract that has option periods remaining; how are these affected by NOAALink?

A: Exercising an option period on a pre-NOAALink contract is discouraged. However, if there are existing option periods under a contract, task order or call, NOAALink may allow you to exercise the option period through the original vendor. In order for NOAALink to determine whether or not your requirement warrants a waiver, you must follow the NOAALink request submission process by completing a NOAALink Worksheet and entering a C.Request.

Please note that the option period must already exist on the current contract, task order, or call. This is permitted because the option period was considered under the competition procedures and evaluated prior to award. The servicing contracting office of the awarded contract, task order or call with the options will provide the contract support for this action.

Exercising option periods under an existing contract, task order, or call is not the same as placing a new call under an existing BPA. Executing a new call under a BPA is a new contract action. Any new call must transition to NOAALink.

TEAMWORK WITH DOC

PC and Accessories Acquisition Portal

Employees from NOAA and across DOC are now making extensive use of a convenient online tool designed to reduce desktop and laptop acquisition costs. NOAALink supported the transition to the Department of Commerce PC and Accessories Acquisition Portal, which has processed $490,000 in orders since opening for business on March 23, 2012. $226,000 in NOAA desktop, laptop and accessories requirements have been purchased through the portal.

By implementing the PC and Accessories Acquisition Portal, DOC reduces time spent on separate contracts, standardizes specifications, streamlines the ordering process, improves average delivery times and increases the Department's small business participation by 30%. As a result, DOC and its agencies get better service and the Department expects to save up to $5 million annually.

For more information about the DOC PC and Accessories Acquisition Portal, visit the DOC website.

MEET THE FACES BEHIND NOAALINK

This quarter, meet Cathy Ossi, Lead Contracting Officer Representative (COR), NOAALink Program Office.

Cathy conducts overall post-award oversight and technical direction for NOAALink core contracts. Concentrating on strategic management services and small business contracts, Cathy works to ensure that a contractor's performance meets the standards in the contract and that NOAA and DOC resources are used and managed effectively.

RESOURCES

Visit our Website

Visit our website for the most up-to-date NOAALink information. FAQs, required documents, and training information are routinely updated for your reference. In order to assure you are viewing the most recent information, be sure to access the site via http://www.cio.noaa.gov/NOAALink/index.html.

Email us

If you are unable to find the information you require on our website, or if you need further guidance, please feel free to contact us at NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov.

Join our Mailing List

To receive important updates on program requirements, required documents, and upcoming training sessions, please join our mailing list by sending an email to NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov.