

Initiative #2 Top Issues / Concerns for Doing Business with NASA

New Procurement Direction

- Center Individualized Missions. Each Center has their own mission and creating a contract that would provide support across the agency or even a region would be difficult because support wouldn't be successful with a one size fits all mentality.
- Concern of fewer opportunities for small businesses to prime contracts and limits on growing your business without past performance.
- NASA regionalization will have major impacts on the small and large NASA industry base. How will NASA ensure re-compete information is provided to industry within a time that allows for contractor dialogue and teaming? What plans does NASA have to ensure ALL socio-economic goals are met while also considering regionalization?
- Best in class (BIC) contracting vehicles. Which BIC contract vehicles will NASA use? Will GSA vehicles play an increasing role in future NASA procurements?
- Category management. What impact will category management play in the future of NASA procurements? (Do you feel GSA vehicles will receive priority treatment since GSA is the lead on the majority of the 10 established categories?)
 - Informing the community of anticipated use of contract vehicles (OASIS, PES/PSS, GSA IT Sched 70, etc.), well in advance, so small businesses have the opportunity to react. Otherwise, we can find ourselves on the outside looking in, if we're not on a particular vehicle, for periods of 10 years or more
- The increased cost of capture activities in pursuit of work across multiple Centers (increased cost of B&P for business)
- Concern with the new NASA initiative to combine like contracts as contracts expire regardless of the Center that is supporting the work will take away more prime opportunities from the Small Business community.
- Prime Contract responsibilities do not lend themselves to use of a particular small business expertise. When responding to sources sought in the era of consolidation, small businesses may not be able to adequately demonstrate ability to prime, causing the risk of going F&O. (depth and breadth) – broad vs. narrow scope
 - SBA reg of similarly situated can assist with smalls partnering to prime larger
 - Incrementally sized contracts allow SBs to grow and gain past performance/capabilities
- NASA-wide consolidation and/or HQ reorg is leaving contracts and/or pieces of contracts with unknown homes and we don't know where to go find the answers. (MAP)

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Large Business requirements for Small Business

- New requirement for Small Businesses to certify prior to award on each individual order is causing extra cost and procurement delays. Adherence to realistic schedules.
- Prime and Civil Servant understanding of how SB plans are evaluated as well as how subsequent evaluation (both in award fee and non-award fee contracts) is developed over the contract term.
- Trends in new NASA RFPs o How is NASA coming up with high % Contract Value goals when recent proposals include launch services, engines and many components provided only by large businesses? They do not seem possible to commit to.
- When RFP is for IDIQ Contract, Primes are less willing to identify specific SB in proposal (because of Bait and Switch rule). This makes our plans look weak and takes leverage away from SBLOs to promote niche SB; enforce SB utilization after win. ■ □ We tell SB to get in the game early, in the RFP stage. NASA tells us to utilize SB strategically, put them in critical roles on the program. This is challenging on IDIQ pursuits

Procurement improvements

- Solicitations should include historical data (e.g., IGE, staffing model, task order information, etc.) to support a good quality bid and level the playing field – providing non-incumbents fair and reasonable information
- Consider consistent, more prevalent site visits during the pre-bid process so vendors can get a better understanding on the magnitude of requirements and pose defining questions
- Use of price performance trade off (PPTO) proposal evaluation methods for acquisition of more technically complex services. While it reduces NASA evaluation resources required, there is a concern that it provides opportunities for lowest price technically acceptable bids without the requisite technical insight to identify risk associated with the level of support required.
 - More past performance based discourages new business entries, new ideas
 - More low cost based results in no technical evaluation, so businesses do not receive any debriefing and therefore no lessons learned
- Improve the clarification of definition, provide more clarity of the evaluation factors so vendors improve their bid and meet the expectations of the government in the proposal
- Increased communication with industry through pre-solicitation notices, information exchanges, and draft RFPs make the acquisition process more transparent and may lower the likelihood of a protest. These techniques can be an effective way to increase competition, especially when there is a strong incumbent. Exchanges with industry are especially important when the procurement requirements are complex.
 - More time between draft and final RFP, especially when the contract is changing from current status, facilitates better understanding, teaming

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- Meetings required with technical staff beyond COR – better access to customers
- Provide preliminary SEB information
- Strengthen the information available on procurements as they are forming to the Center SBSs to allow sharing to the small business community
- The Government should indicate when continuity of workforce, expertise and institutional knowledge of the work environment is more desirable than reduced salaries. (Provide more Section M clarity – i.e., is there a desire to lower salaries as wage creep has taken over and looking for more affordable solution)
 - The pressure to reduce salaries and benefits of employees increases as a phenomenon of the competitive conditions and fewer business opportunities (concern with the use LPTAs)

Past Performance

- CPAR: There is no requirement for NASA to scope the CPAR inputs. Example: There was an issue with one contract employee. There is no scope to state one employee out of 20 or one employee out of 250. Always just the statement no scope to show the realm of the problem. Quantify / data in context of the volume / percentage of contract
- Clearance / past performance requirements at time of submission often negatively impact JVs – with larger small business efforts, more JVs will form to prime
- Subcontractor past performance. Documented past performance is a key evaluation criterion. However, NASA subcontractors do not have a mechanism for receiving past performance ratings. NASA does not have privity of contract with the subcontracts and primes are reluctant to provide past performance assessments (i.e., questionnaires)
 - Prime acknowledgement of subcontractors on CPARs would assist with this.
- Utilization of high dollar amount past performance examples for solicitation past performance requirements. This may eliminate a majority of small businesses (SB) for competing for SB set-asides.
 - Should be consistent with the size standard of the procurement (% of total new contract value)

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Protests

- The most recent state of contract protests and the longevity of them puts both Prime and subcontractors in disadvantageous situations. The success of both the Prime and the small business are impacted. During the lengthy protests, situations change dramatically and oftentimes, the proposal submitted cannot be executed as bid because of the length of time the protest and subsequent award took.
- Protests are problematic for everyone, except incumbent
- Are there any changes on the horizon?
- Costs associated with key personnel, infrastructure updates awaiting award

General

- In counting the total dollars for small business, is there a way to gauge the number of small businesses that comprise that number – is trending up or down?
- Bi-monthly invoicing for small business primes. Recommend that the Centers or NASA have an organization wide policy on how they will solicit and implement this FAR supported option. Currently, this is at the discretion of individual contracting officers, which leads to an arbitrary and inconsistent application of the rule.