



ALLIANT INDUSTRY DAY  
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS  
Washington DC - March 29, 2004

Q: How did the Alliant GWAC center come up with the percentage of awards reserved for small business?

A: The GWAC center is aiming to improve upon their past record in awarding to small business. This percentage was arrived at based on historical data from task orders placed against the ANSWER GWAC.

Q: Will ITOP 2 be combined into Alliant?

A: The transition of the ITOP 2 contract into the GWAC center is not complete. Once the contract is in-house, we will do an assessment of the contract and make this determination. As of this moment, ITOP 2 will not be merged into Alliant.

Q: Can you elaborate on the requirement for 40 hours of training on this performance-based contract?

A: The requirement for 40 hours of training is in the ANSWER contract. Alliant will be performance based, so this requirement will go away. Industry partners will be required to show that personnel are trained at a level appropriate to the task.

Q: Several GSA GWACs have used similar criteria for addressing the needs of small business. What is the reason for not specifically defining the exact number of small business awards under the contract? Also, what is the reason for using the term “reserve” as opposed to “set-aside”?

A: There are specific criteria for “set-asides.” We want to be aggressive in helping socio-economic groups and small business, but that is not our primary focus. Industry has provided us with feedback and suggestions on how to address the needs of small business. Once we finish our market research, we will make a final determination.

Q: GSA has met with trade associations for input on Alliant prior to issuing the initial procurement criteria. Which trade associations have you met with and when?

A: We have been conducting market research and working on the Alliant business case since November 2002. We have met with the IF SIG and other small business focus groups around the country. We have conducted focus groups and meetings with internal clients, direct order/direct bill clients and end user clients to determine if the features we are looking at address their future needs. In April, we will meet with CIO Council. Unfortunately, we will not have the time to meet with every trade association that has expressed interest in the Alliant contract. We believe, however, that together with the industry days, this considerable amount of market research will be sufficient to form and validate the procurement criteria.

Q: Will Alliant require the industry partner to have DCAA approved financial systems prior to or after award? I recommend that small business be allowed to have an audit of their cost reimbursement system after award.

A: A DCAA approved financial system will be an Alliant GWAC requirement. At this time, we do not know if an audit will be required before or after award, but we will take your recommendation on advisement. We are looking at the cost accounting conducted in Millennia – the Millennia PCO is constructing a lessons learned focusing on this area – and have some ideas that will enable us to do a better job on Alliant.

Q: The proposed NAICS codes for the Alliant contract include satellite telecom and “other” telecom. Can you elaborate on these requirements? Will there be any overlap with the Networx contract?

A: The focus is on the IT components of telecommunications. We do not feel there will be any overlap with the Networx contract. The definition of “other” telecommunications is available on the NAICS website.

Q: Why is the Alliant GWAC center encouraging small business teaming arrangements?

A: Given the magnitude of Alliant, which will combine the requirements from both ANSWER and Millennia, we feel it will be difficult for any small business to go it alone on the contract. Therefore, we are encouraging industry to team up. We know it is difficult to form teams by cold-calling. To assist you in finding partners, we incorporated a networking activity into the industry day sessions and we will maintain an “interested parties” list on the Alliant site.

Q: What are the requirements for teaming partnerships?

A: During our market research, we received feedback from industry regarding teaming requirements. We have discussed options for teaming combinations and scenarios as well as the governing rules and guidelines. As we finalize the teaming requirements, we will post the information on the Alliant website.

Q: Considering the \$150 billion ceiling, are twenty primes enough to handle the anticipated orders?

A: This question has been raised by industry on several occasions during our market research. As a result, we understand the need to revisit this decision and consider making more than twenty awards.



Q: Is there a preference for partnerships consisting of one large business teamed with several small businesses or partnerships comprised solely of small business teams?

A: No decisions have been made regarding the requirements for teaming arrangements or if upper and lower limits are appropriate. We understand that industry needs this information in order to form teams. As contract requirements decisions are reached, the information will be posted on the Alliant website.

Q: What mechanics will be employed to ensure that the 25% small business participation goal is met?

A: The evaluation criteria have not been finalized. These criteria will be developed to allow small business to compete and win prime contracts on the Alliant contract vehicle.

Q: Since there has never been a contract of this size, how will small business prove their ability to compete? How will the evaluation criteria for past performance enable small business to demonstrate capability to perform on a large task order, e.g. \$75 to \$100 million?

A: We have not finalized the criteria for evaluating past performance. We will make a determination based on the evaluation criteria that we establish.

Q: When will the Alliant Statement of Work (Section C) become available? Industry needs this information to develop appropriate partnerships and teaming arrangements.

A: We have a draft of the Section C and plan on releasing it to industry as soon as possible. We are incorporating information gathered at the industry day sessions into the Statement of Work. We then need to have the document approved by FSS management.

Q: Will we see the Section C before the RFC?

A: We will try to do that. We understand how important this is to industry, but OMB has final word

Q: Will Alliant include requirements for classified work?

A: We have not made a determination on classified work. This will be addressed in the finalized Section H.

Q: Will Alliant require that small business teams consist only of small businesses?

A: We were exploring this possibility early on. We are now looking at a variety of scenarios based on feedback from industry. The small business teaming requirements will be posted on the Alliant website as soon as they are finalized.

Q: At the Alliant Industry Day in Oakland, GSA recommended to industry that they prepare to spend between \$500,000 and \$600,000 on the Alliant proposal and also be prepared to start early on a response. What was the basis behind these estimates?

A: This recommendation did not come out of the GSA office. After the Alliant briefing in Oakland, a presenter from small business briefed industry on joint ventures. The estimate for proposal preparation was included in this presentation. The GWAC center did suggest that industry partners begin formulating their responses as early as possible, because it will require a considerable amount of time to put a bid together.

Q: What are the guidelines for teaming?

A: We have not made a final determination on the rules for teaming. We need to address questions such as if someone is a prime, can they also be a sub on another proposal, etc. We did not want to finalize these rules until we had completed the market research phase. We understand the importance of questions regarding small business and will try to resolve these issues first.

Q: What are the evaluation criteria?

A: We have not completed sections L & M. We have not finalized how we will perform the evaluations.

Q: Regarding the skills mentioned in the briefing, will GSA adhere to FAR 39.104?

A: Yes. FAR 39.104 addresses the educational requirements for IT tasks. We are not going to ask for education requirements; but we will ask industry to ensure the appropriate levels of training for the proposed skill.

Q: With respect to teaming as it relates to small business, is the current thinking that evaluation will be the primes ability to partner or actual past performance?

A: We have not determined how the evaluation criteria will be structured. Industry has offered a number of ways to do this. We have not finalized a method.

Q: In September, are you releasing a document for comment?

A: Yes, we plan on releasing a draft RFP.

Q: Will the GWAC center release attributes of the contract after OMB approval?

A: We would like to put out a draft requirements document so industry can see at least a Section C. We would also like to release other sections, particularly ones that impact teaming arrangements. We would like to put this out before the RFC

Q: You mentioned information assurance as one of the technologies, but did not mention absorbing SafeGuard. Do you intend to merge SafeGuard into Alliant?

A: SafeGuard was a BPA that expired last year. Per the CRB, there is no follow on to SafeGuard. We have not put any of the SafeGuard features into Alliant.

Q: Can you elaborate on your comments regarding minor installation?

A: The intent is to make sure we are not doing construction or using money from the IT fund for construction. In the Alliant business case, we indicated a preference for minor installation to be sub-contracted to a small business contractor. But the primary purpose is IT funds limitations. Once the contract has been awarded, sub contracting would have to go to schedule holder. OMB may want to change the wording to “must be” or “may be.” A teaming partner is approved at a contract level. Subs are approved at a task order level, so additional subs may be added on to accommodate minor installations which would be at the sub-contracting level.

Q: Does the GWAC center anticipate having additional forums like this?

A: We’ve had that request. After today’s sessions, we will finalize the contract sections. We plan on conducting other focus groups. Sherry Householder is meeting with CIO council in April. Other industry groups have expressed interest in conducting focus groups. We will entertain these requests.

Q: Have you determined the small business size standard applicable for priming?

A: The current biz case says \$21 million. Industry wants to change that to employees rather than revenue to align with the new proposed ruling by the SBA. We will have a better idea of how will do this after the results of the SBA ruling.

Q: Are we going to allow for procurement of hardware and software?

A: Hardware would be considered incidental similar to the current ANSWER contract. On Answer, there are a number of GSA sources, e.g. eBuy, for hardware sales. We would like to keep hardware purchases in house. Do not want to change from the current method that is used by ANSWER and Millennia.

Q: The list of NAICS codes enumerated thus far seems narrow. For example, there is no information sharing, data discovery, or data search mentioned. What is the comprehensive nature of this contract?

A: You raise a valid point. We have had feedback from industry on our NAICS. Industry has actually provided specific NAICS to include. We are going to take a second look at our proposed list. We will provide further information on the web site as we know more about the NAICS codes to be included.

Q: With respect to Homeland Security, will Alliant have expanded disaster recovery fully integrated within the contract? Is there a NAICS code that specifically relates to continuity of Government or continuity of operations?

A: Alliant will have security features in the scope. Disaster recovery is a specialized field. Right now, it is not in our proposal mainly because there is a disaster recovery GWAC.

Q: GSA is reserving 25% to small business but not planning to “set-aside” this work. What guarantee goes with “reserve”?

A: If we do a set aside, we are mandated to set aside certain levels. Alliant will not set aside at those levels. That would be more appropriate for a small business contract.

Q: What does reserving do?

A: This is an internal legal issue. It’s what we need to do to meet small business goals. We think we have some aggressive goals. We can provide a more detailed explanation as to how we came up with this process. We had to explain this to OMB also.

Q: Will GSA have a strategy for holding large business accountable?

A: Yes

Q: How will small business primes compete against large primes?

A: Task order requests go out to all primes. No money is reserved for small business awardees. Our frame of reference is ANSWER. On ANSWER, there were two small businesses under contract that competed under fair opportunity. They have been very successful. They captured over 22% of the Task Order business on the contract. Often times when the requirement comes down to cost, small business does better.

Q: Initially, you were looking for consortiums vs. teaming arrangement. What happened to that idea?

A: There is no legal definition for coalition or consortium. The FAR calls this a joint venture. We needed to find a term that would be legally sufficient. There may be individuals that want to engage in Joint Venture, but FAR has requirements that they may not want to satisfy. At the Oakland Industry Day, a small business representative presented a briefing on joint ventures and the differences between consortiums and coalitions. We will post this presentation on the web site.

Q: How will GSA ensure a level playing field for small businesses realizing that the draft RFP does not specifically denote small business award?

A: Have not written evaluation criteria yet or the draft RFP. We understand that we need to come up with good fair evaluation criteria.

Q: As the final step of the award process, we need to sign off on financial viability. How will small business be financially viable in a \$150 billion world?

A: Industry has provided us with some suggestions. We have not yet determined a method for this.

Q: Are you considering utilizing award plan options for the option years? Have you included award term to incentivize large business?

A: Right now, this is not in our business case. No other GWAC has a 15 year period of performance. We do not know what OMB's response will be to our business case, but at the current time, we have no provisions for award term.

Q: With respect to small business reservation – how might this be allocated?

A: Not determined yet.

Q: Is there a potential for small disabled veterans?

A: We haven't reached that phase yet. The HubZone contract is coming out of Region 6. They are also doing a disabled veterans' GWAC.

Q: Might there be an opportunity to put together a group of small businesses to provide some input?

A: Yes, this could be arranged. Contact the GWAC Center Director, Sherrie Householder.