A Contractor’s Guide: Is the Alliant 2 RFP for You?
Are you finding yourself completely overwhelmed with all the information out there on GSA’s Alliant 2? Understanding the draft RFP can be a challenge in itself in addition to monitoring the constant updates released on the GSA Interact website. As a follow on to the first wildly successful Alliant Government Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC), Alliant 2 is fueling the same excitement with numerous updates released in the past year and half. But what information amid all those updates will help you understand whether Alliant 2 is the right fit for your company?

Among the many updates and radio interviews posted on the GSA Interact website was the Alliant 2 GWAC team’s discussion on the types of contractors that should bid. According to the team, Alliant 2 is designed to encompass all areas of the Information Technology government contracting industry. They mentioned these areas would also include ancillary services such as digging ditches to run a fiber optic cable. The phrase “anything IT anywhere” was also used by the team which indicates the broad spectrum of bidders expected. With regard to the types of contractors that should bid, the team agreed that this was a tough area to address given that their job is to make the RFP as fair and open as possible. However, they did specify **they will be attempting to evaluate those companies which have IT specialties in four areas that will be the focus of the federal government in the future. These areas include Development, Security, Health IT, and Data.** As the clock continues to tick with the final RFP due in mid-spring of 2016 (we realize this release date brings flashbacks to the winter 2015 due date which came and went), contractors should arm themselves with sufficient information to understand whether this RFP is for them or not.

The purpose of this whitepaper is to provide contractors with information on prominent points of the Alliant 2 draft RFP including:

- Basic information such as contract types permitted under the Master Contract, requirements of cost or pricing data, source selection, and the scoring methodology
- Details of the proposal screening and evaluation steps
- A ranking of each scoring table section from highest point value to lowest point value
- Trending topics that have been addressed by the Alliant 2 GWAC team including; past performance, leading edge technologies, and system certifications
I. The Basics

The Alliant 2 (A2) contract is a Multiple Award IDIQ Government Wide Acquisition Contract to be awarded by GSA. Alliant 2 is to provide information technology solutions through performance of a broad range of services. The government anticipates up to a maximum of 80 awards will be made under Alliant 2 SB (A2SB) and a maximum of 60 awards under the Alliant 2 Unrestricted (A2) contract. The Alliant 2 contracts will likely be the largest federal IT services contracts of the next decade as measured by volume of orders. Alliant 2 Unrestricted has a $50 billion ceiling over 10 years, while Alliant 2 Small Business has a $15 billion ceiling.

**Contract Types**

- Task Order types permitted under the Master Contract include:
  - Fixed Price
  - Cost Reimbursement
  - Incentive
  - Requirements
  - Time & Materials
  - Labor Hour

**Cost & Pricing Data**

While the Lead Contracting Officer anticipates pricing will be based on adequate price competition and therefore doesn’t require certification of cost and pricing data, offerors are cautioned to provide clear and concise explanations of their pricing methodology as well as their labor and burden estimating practice. Offerors are warned against unbalanced and unrealistic pricing.

**Source Selection**

The source selection will neither be based on Lowest Priced Technically Acceptable (LPTA) nor Tradeoffs. During a time when industry is bitterly complaining about the LPTA environment, industry should be quite excited and relieved that the Alliant 2 award is based on the highest technically rated, fair and reasonable price.

**Scoring Methodology**

Of major importance to Alliant 2 offerors is the self-scoring methodology to be used. The details of this scoring method will be addressed in a later section of this white paper, but offerors can rest easy knowing the Alliant 2 team stressed there will be no requirement for a minimal passing grade. They feel that imposing a requirement of a minimum passing grade would limit them in their selections and ultimately cut out companies that might be a good fit. During a time when protests have significantly delayed several other major IT acquisition vehicles such as the Air Force’s Network Centric Solutions-2 Application Services Contract and NASA’s SEWP V, John...
Cavadias, Lead Contracting Officer, stated the team was trying to make the scoring method as objective as possible by allowing industry to tell them what they’re doing wrong. The hope is that this feedback from industry would help mitigate some of the protests and any problems before the final RFP is released. The team also stressed that self-scoring should be done honestly as they will be digging in deep to verify all documentation required.

II. Screening & Evaluation Process

As previously noted, Alliant 2 proposals will be evaluated off of a self-scoring worksheet. Offerors are required to complete and submit the self-scoring worksheet with the proposal. The screening and evaluation process will proceed as follows:

Upon receiving proposals, the GSA Alliant 2 evaluation team will order the offers from highest score to lowest score solely using the offeror’s self-scoring worksheet to establish the preliminary top 80 and top 60 under A2SB and A2 Unrestricted. The evaluation team will then screen each proposal to verify that support documents exist for all technical evaluation elements. The top 80 and top 60 will next need to pass the Acceptability Review which requires the offerors’ SF 33, proposal checklist, document verification/self-scoring worksheet, meaningful relationship commitment letters (if applicable), existing joint venture/partnership (if applicable), professional employee compensation plan, and uncompensated overtime policy. These documents will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis for whether the information provided meets the information requested. Following the Acceptability Review, there will be a detailed technical evaluation of the claimed points on the self-scoring sheet.

Next, the evaluation team will verify the offerors have proposed a fair and reasonable price by determining whether the direct labor rates proposed for each RFP labor category are within the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System ranges identified in the RFP. Offerors are strongly advised to provide clear and convincing rationale to support a lower or higher direct labor rate than the range provided in the RFP. Otherwise, the proposed direct labor rates outside of the identified ranges in the RFP will not be considered fair and reasonable and the offeror will not be eligible for award regardless of the technical score. For each indirect rate, the basis will be the offeror’s most current approved billing rates, forward pricing rate agreements, acceptable accounting system generated rates, or rationale provided by the contractor to support the proposed indirect rates. If during any of these steps, the offeror’s rates are not deemed to be fair and reasonable, the next highest rated offeror will be added in the eliminated offeror’s place.

III. Scoring Table Sections Ranked by Point Value

Included in the draft RFP is the scoring table that offerors use as a basis to self-score. The scoring table has a maximum number of 75,600 points for both A2 Unrestricted and A2SB. Below is a ranking of each section in the scoring table from largest point value to lowest point value.
1. Past Performance for Product Service Code (PSC) Relevant Experience Projects: 17,500 points
2. PSC Group Relevant Experience Projects: 17,000 points
   • PSC Group Relevant Experience Projects must be either ongoing or must have been completed within 5 years of date of the RFP. They must also be prime contracts that are greater than $1M.
3. System certifications: 7,600 points
   • Important to note is that the Cost Accounting System has the largest amount of system certification points with 5,500 points
4. Leading Edge Technology Relevant Experience: 6,000 points
5. Tie between PSC Group Relevant Experience Project Size & Complexity and ISO certifications: 4,500 points each
6. PSC Group Relevant Experience Project with Cost-Reimbursement: 4,000 points
7. Tie between PSC Group Relevant Experience Project – Multiple Agency Awards and Government Facility Clearances: 3,500 points
8. PSC Group Relevant Experience – Fair Opportunity Task Order Against MA/IDIQ Contract: 3,000 points
9. Three way tie between PSC Group Relevant Experience Project in a Foreign Location, Breadth of Leading Edge Technology Relevant Experience, and CMMI: 1,500 points

Keep in mind one of the big advantages of Alliant 2 is the fact that offerors can very accurately self-score on the technical areas and calculate their scores in advance. Most notably, points for past performance and relevant experience are critical equaling almost 50% of the total points. A summarized version of each scoring section from largest point value to lowest point value and weighted percentage is shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Section Name</th>
<th>Max Points</th>
<th>Weighted %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>L.5.3</td>
<td>Past Performance for Relevant Experience Projects</td>
<td>17,500</td>
<td>23.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>L.5.2.2</td>
<td>PSC Group Relevant Experience Projects</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>22.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>L.5.4.1 - L.5.4.5</td>
<td>Systems (Accounting, Purchasing, FPRA, Estimating, EVMS)</td>
<td>7,600</td>
<td>10.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>L.5.2.3</td>
<td>Leading Edge Technology Relevant Experience Projects</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>7.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>L.5.2.2.2</td>
<td>PSC Group Relevant Experience Project Size &amp; Complexity</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>5.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>L.5.4.7 - L.5.4.9</td>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>5.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>L.5.2.2.4</td>
<td>PSC Group Relevant Experience Project with Cost-Reimbursement</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>L.5.2.2.3</td>
<td>PSC Group Relevant Experience Project - Multiple Agency Awards</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>L.5.4.1.0</td>
<td>Government Facility Clearances</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>L.5.2.2.5</td>
<td>PSC Group Relevant Experience - Fair Opportunity Task Order Award Against MA/IDIQ Contract</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>L.5.2.2.6</td>
<td>PSC Group Relevant Experience Project in a Foreign Location</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>L.5.2.3.2</td>
<td>Breadth of Leading Edge Technology Relevant Experience</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>L.5.4.6</td>
<td>CMMI</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL POINTS** 75,600 100%
IV. Trending Topics Addressed by the Alliant 2 GWAC Team

Fueling the excitement about the release of Alliant 2, the A2 GWAC Team, (consisting of Program Director Casey Kelley, Lead Contracting Officer John Cavadias, and Senior Technologist Richard Blake), has been publicizing key areas of the draft RFP on the GSA Interact community website. GSA Interact has offered numerous links to the Alliant 2 team radio interviews as well as insight into topics discussed at the many one-on-one meetings the team had with contractors. Contractors should be mindful of these Alliant 2 trending topics which include; past performance, leading edge technologies, and system certifications.

Past Performance

Evaluation of contractor past performance has been a topic of continuous discussion with questions arising on how past performance would be rated in the RFP. Per the second draft RFP, an offeror can submit up to seven projects for review on past performance. A past performance assessment must be submitted for each Product Service Code (PSC) Relevant Experience project submitted, however no past performance submissions are required for any Leading Edge Technology projects. If the Government has interim or final ratings in the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PIPRs), the contractor shall provide a copy of this rating with the proposal. If the Government has not finalized past-performance ratings in the PIPRS database which links to the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS); or, if the project(s) are considered Non-U.S. Federal projects, the contractor is required to submit a certified Past Performance Survey using the template provided in the RFP. Contractors will be evaluated on overall ratings earned for each past performance assessment submitted based on the PIPRS database or the Past Performance Rating Form. Each project submitted for review will receive a rating of positive or negative. A positive rating indicates a rating of satisfactory or above with negative ratings meaning marginal or unsatisfactory for which the offeror will receive no points.

Leading Edge Technologies

Leading Edge Technologies (LETs) may be a familiar term for contractors as they prepare for the Alliant 2 RFP, but how important are they in the grand scheme of Alliant 2? The A2 team has examined the role of Leading Edge Technologies and exactly how much these would define the scope of Alliant 2. The thought is for these LETs to serve as evidence of relevant IT experience for contractors. According to Richard Blake, leading edge technologies would not define the scope of Alliant 2 but they are nonetheless a critical gauge of “industry interest about where things are headed.” With respect to advice for contractors who want to participate in Alliant 2, the team urged contractors to review their libraries of leading edge technologies and product service codes (PSC). Contractors are advised to “subjectively” review these libraries, reasonably cite work and further, gather the necessary documentation as required. There are currently 10 LETs which include Artificial Intelligence (AI),
Autonomic Computing, Big Data, Biometrics, Cloud Computing, Cyber Security, Health Information Technology, Mobile IT, The Internet of Things (IoT), and Virtual Networking. Contractors may submit three distinct projects for each LET for a maximum of thirty (30) distinct LET Experience Projects.

**System Certifications**

System requirements included in this section are not minimum or mandatory requirements but, **contractors who have these systems and certifications are considered more favorably per the scoring table.**

If claiming credit for the following systems or agreements, verification requirements include a copy of the contractor’s official review report from the DCAA or DCMA or any Cognizant Federal Agency stating that each system has been audited and determined acceptable.

- **Cost Accounting System and Audit Information**
  - *For audit verification documents older than five years, contractors may supplement their submission with self-evaluations of their accounting systems and include an audit by an independent certified public accountant (CPA) of their choosing to indicate that there have not been material changes.*

- **Purchasing System**
  - *Audit verification documents should not be older than 5 years*

- **Forward Pricing Rate Agreements/Recommendation or Approved Billing Rates**

- **Earned Value Management System (EVMS)**

- **Estimating System**

The A2 team received questions on whether third party pre-award accounting system certifications would suffice. The team clarified that third party pre-award accounting system certifications will not be sufficient. But remember the draft RFP states that for audit verification documents older than five years, contractors may supplement their submission with self-evaluations of their accounting systems. They also have the option to include an audit by an independent certified public accountant (CPA) of their choosing to indicate there have not been material changes.

**V. Conclusion**

With so many factors involved in proposal evaluations, it is difficult to gauge whether a win is possible. For contractors, it can be a costly decision if not carefully considering all factors. However, by evaluating the chances of success using the information outlined above, contractors can make an informed decision on whether Alliant 2 is the right opportunity for them.
Interested in learning more?

If you have questions about the Alliant 2 RFP or would like to discuss your company’s needs, please reach out to Aisha Mian, Managing Consultant in Aronson’s Government Contract Services Group, at amian@aronsonllc.com, or call 301.231.6200.

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