

**Solicitation Number:**

RFINCEP2014

**Notice Type:**

Special Notice

**Synopsis:**

Added: Aug 18, 2014 4:44 pm

**Description:**

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY - Solicitations are not available at this time. Requests for a solicitation will not receive a response. This notice does not constitute a commitment by the United States Government.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is conducting market research for the purpose of understanding the High Performance Computing (HPC) marketplace, available sources, changes in market conditions which may enhance the NOAA advanced HPC Weather and Climate Operational Supercomputing Systems (WCOSS) to the next generation WCOSS II. Responses to this RFI will assist the Government with a decision to acquire new systems to replace or augment the existing platform currently supporting the computational modeling resources for the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) located in College Park, Maryland.

Increased computational power is essential for NOAA to meet its strategic goals related to weather, climate, air quality, coastal and ocean resource management, and national commerce support, thereby providing improved service to the public. The HPCS requirements include scheduled scalable technology enhancements, unanticipated additional internal (NOAA) HPC requirements as well as external partner agency's weather related HPC needs. Maintaining the current computational power and increasing this power through scalable measures overtime is essential for NOAA to meet its strategic goals.

NOAA requires the contractor to design, deliver and support a complete and fully integrated system and redundant system solution capable of immediate failover transfer to operational readiness within minutes. One of the HPCS will be used in the operational environment and the second HPCS will be used for research and development; however, the systems must be interchangeable (i.e. hardware, operating systems, etc.). This requirement facilitates and accelerates the process of transitioning to NCEP's production or operational codes suite software developed in the research and development environment.

The Request For Proposal (RFP) for WCOSS II is anticipated to be issued in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2015, with contract award by fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2015 and initial delivery of the new system not later than the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2017.

Budgetary Information

The following Budgetary Information is being provided for planning purposes. The budget amounts do not commit the Government to obligate funds or to purchase services in these amounts:

- Fiscal Year 2015-2016 - \$64M
- Fiscal Year 2017 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2018 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2019 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2020 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2021 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2022 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2023 - \$30M
- Fiscal Year 2024 - \$15M

NOAA is seeking innovative concepts and approaches to obtain the needed computing systems within the established requirements and time frames. The "Draft" Statement of Work (SOW) and supporting documents attached with this RFI are intended to open a formal communication channel between industry and the Government as well as provide the High Performance Computing Industry with insight to the NOAA/NCEP unique system requirements.

The attachments to the SOW include the Appendices and Benchmark Code Instructions to be used as a source of information. The Benchmarks are in the process of being updated and not ready for release at this time. Baseline timings will also be updated after the next upgrade of the operational computer, currently planned for January 2015. All information will be updated with the release of any future RFP.

The Government welcomes industry comments, questions and suggestions that will aid it in understanding industry capabilities, developing its acquisition strategy and finalizing the SOW. The Government may conduct one-on-one communications with interested vendors in an effort to benefit fully from industry responses to this RFI. One of the principal outcomes of vendor/government dialog will be to ensure that viable approaches are considered during any future competition. The Government may therefore utilize the information provided to refine its acquisition strategy to maximize competition among viable acquisition alternatives.

It is not the Government's intent to disclose vendor proprietary information and trade secrets to the public. The information submitted by vendors during the market research period may be used by the Government in preparing its RFP and finalizing the SOW, provided this can be done without disclosing proprietary vendor information that is protected from disclosure pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act and other laws and regulations.

Interested vendors should respond in writing to the following topics.

1) Do any of the SOW requirements pose a significant impediment to your company's decision to take part in this acquisition?

2) Do the disincentives for Operational Use Time and Development Use Time pose a risk such that they would impact your company's decision on whether or not to take part in this acquisition?

3) Are the requirements as stated neutral to both Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) and Systems Integrator? If not please explain.

4) Do any of the requirements appear to be ambiguous or too vague? If so, please list them with your concerns.

5) Are the charts and graphs found in the appendices useful?

6) What additional information or data concerning the current WCOSS operations should be included in the Statement of Work?

7) Does the planned upgrade schedule pose any significant challenges or concerns? If so please explain.

8) NOAA's requirement is for a 'complete and fully integrated' system (i.e. "Total Solution"). Describe the Vendor's ability/approach to provide this complete system solution. Briefly describe the involvement Vendor's organization has had in providing HPC systems to Vendor's customers. Has this involvement included weather/climate applications? Please provide previous or existing contract numbers and descriptions along with contact information.

9) Describe any anticipated HPC technology developments (i.e. compute, storage, network) that NOAA should be aware of to ensure that the SOW elicits the best responses from the vendor community.

10) Describe the largest file size Vendor's system can handle now, whether this is a hardware or software limitation and projections for the largest file size during the base and option periods of performance. Describe any alternatives solutions to maximize file size and trade-offs compared with other solutions. Describe the largest number of nodes Vendor's file system can handle now and projections for the base and option periods of performance. Describe any alternatives solutions to maximize node number and trade-offs compared with other solutions.

11) What is the impact to your organization to deliver the SOW requirements given the restrictions contained in the Attachment - Procurement Memorandum 2014-04 entitled "Supply Chain Risk Management Restrictions On Information Technology Acquisitions - Interim Guidance (Phase 1)"?

12) Small Business participation in this acquisition is desired. How can the Government encourage and support small business involvement in this acquisition?

The vendor's submission should reflect an understanding of NOAA's High Performance Computing requirements for product delivery and an overall approach for providing the required capabilities. Multiple or alternative approaches are welcome. Although this RFI requests specific information, it is not intended to discourage innovative thinking on the part of industry to propose alternative solutions or approaches that the Government may not have considered.

Vendors responding should provide a point-of-contact, including: representative's name, email address, mailing address, and telephone number.

#### Project Website

The Request for Information documents which describe the WCOSS II project are being made available via the Internet at the Project Website <http://rdhpcs.noaa.gov/WCOSSII/>. Interested parties are encouraged to continually monitor this web site for information and updates concerning the project. Vendors may submit questions regarding the RFI directly to the Contracting Officer and to the Project Website. The Government will post the summarized version of the questions and answers to the Project Website within a reasonable period of time. All information posted to the Project Website will be anonymous.

#### Response Format

Please prepare one (1) paper hard copy and one (1) electronic Adobe Acrobat Portable Document File (PDF) format, formatted for 8.5" by 11" sheets, single-spaced. All documents submitted (including charts and graphs) should be limited to no more than thirty-five (35) pages.

#### Delivery Requirements

The Government requests all electronic responses be received as a single package by 12:00 PM local time, on Tuesday, September 2, 2014 to the Contracting Officer, [Michael.Blumenfeld@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Blumenfeld@noaa.gov).

Hard copies must be received no later than three (3) working days from the electronic response date, at the following address:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Acquisition & Grants Office (AGO-SSAD)  
1325 East-West Highway, Building SSMC II, RM 11360  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3281  
Attn: Mike Blumenfeld  
Phone: 301-628-1347  
Email: [Michael.blumenfeld@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.blumenfeld@noaa.gov)

Note that vendors need not respond to this RFI as a prerequisite for participating in the acquisition.

**Contracting Office Address:**

SSMC2 - 11th floor /OFA61  
1325 East West Highway, 11th Floor  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
United States

**Place of Performance:**

National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) Central Operations / W/NP1  
5830 University Research Court

College Park, Maryland 20746  
United States

**Primary Point of Contact.:**

Michael Blumenfeld,  
Contracting Officer  
[michael.blumenfeld@noaa.gov](mailto:michael.blumenfeld@noaa.gov)

Phone: 3016281347

Fax: Not applicable

**Secondary Point of Contact:**

Franklin Miles,  
Contract Specialist (Support)  
[Franklin.Miles@noaa.gov](mailto:Franklin.Miles@noaa.gov)

Phone: 3016281357

Fax: Not Applicable