**Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Operations Contract II (NOC II)** **Sources Sought Synopsis/Request for Information (RFI)**

**80JSC023NOC02**

**General Information**

* **Contract Opportunity Type:**Sources Sought (Original)
* **All Dates/Times are:**(UTC-06:00) CENTRAL STANDARD TIME, CHICAGO, USA
* **Original Published Date:**February 03, 2023
* **Original Response Date:**March 06, 2023
* **Inactive Policy:**15 days after response date
* **Original Inactive Date:**
* **Initiative:**
  + None

**Classification**

* **Original Set Aside:**
* **Product Service Code: R425** - SUPPORT- PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING/TECHNICAL
* **NAICS Code:** **541715** - RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHYSICAL, ENGINEERING, AND LIFE SCIENCES (EXCEPT NANOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY)
* **Place of Performance:**

Houston, TX 77058

USA

**Description**

**Background:**

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (JSC) Flight Operations Directorate (FOD) is hereby requesting information from potential sources for the Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory (NBL) Operations Contract II (NOC II) solicitation. JSC is issuing this Sources Sought Synopsis/Request for Information (RFI) as a means of conducting market research to identify parties having an interest in, and the resources to, support this requirement. This acquisition will be a follow-on procurement to the current NASA NOC, contract #80JSC017C0001. The result of this market research will contribute to determining the type and method of procurement. The applicable North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code assigned to this procurement is 541715, Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (except Nanotechnology and Biotechnology). Under this NAICS code a business is considered small if its number of employees is less than 1,000.

NASA JSC is seeking capability statements from all interested parties, including all categories of Large Business, Small Business (SB), all socioeconomic categories of Small Business and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)/Minority Institutions (MI), for the purposes of determining the appropriate level of competition and/or small business subcontracting goals for NOC II. The Government reserves the right to consider a Small, 8(a), Women-owned (WOSB), Service-Disabled Veteran (SD-VOSB), Economically Disadvantaged Women-owned Small Business (ED-WOSB) or HUB Zone business set-aside based on responses received.

**NOC II Description:**

The proposed NOC II contract will provide operational support services to the NBL. It is anticipated that the NOC II will be a single-award, Cost-Plus-Award-Fee Completion Form contract with an Indefinite-Delivery, Indefinite-Quantity feature. The current NOC IDIQ feature represents approximately 30% of contract value, and it is anticipated that NOC II will maintain a similar percentage of IDIQ contract value. It is also anticipated that there will be an option to transition to Cost-Plus-Fixed-Fee and/or Firm-Fixed-Price task orders at the discretion of the Government.

For your reference, the current NOC Statement of Work (SOW) and Data Requirements Descriptions (DRDs) are attached to this posting. NASA anticipates releasing the draft NOC II SOW and DRDs within several weeks. It is anticipated that there will be some changes between the NOC SOW and DRDs and the NOC II SOW and DRDs. Interested parties are encouraged to carefully review the draft NOC II SOW and DRDs for changes upon their release.

The NBL is a key Agency asset that supports human space flight training by simulating weightless and partial gravity environments through underwater diving operations. It provides capabilities for astronaut training, real-time mission troubleshooting, flight hardware development and verification, water survival training, and support of external customers. Because of the NBL’s importance to the NASA mission, and the highly hazardous operations performed there, the NBL has high-visibility to agency management and the general public. The NBL also includes a Logistics and Mockup Facility (LMF) that provides fabrication, repair, and maintenance of mockups.

The NBL is operated by JSC’s Flight Operations Directorate (FOD). The NBL currently supports the International Space Station (ISS), Artemis (including Orion, Gateway, and Lunar Surface operations), other NASA space programs, and other JSC directorates (e.g. Engineering, Health and Human Performance, and Public Affairs). In addition to the JSC directorates, the NBL also supports other NASA field centers, other Government agencies (e.g. U.S. Coast Guard), and commercial companies.

The support provided includes the use of the NBL for submerged and surface activities. The LMF is also available to provide hardware repairs or modifications to increase productivity in the NBL.

The mockups used in the NBL are full-scale (1:1) models of spacecraft, spacecraft components, or lunar surface features. Depending on their purpose, mockups can vary from “low fidelity”, which models the basic volume and shape of the item, to “high fidelity” which very closely matches the “look and feel” of the item. Mockups can be built to last briefly (e.g. for short-term engineering evaluations) or for many years. NBL mockups are usually made from stainless steel, composites and plastics and are intended for multi-year use.

JSC is eager to support and partner with the burgeoning Commercial Spaceflight Industry and recognizes that the NBL provides unique capabilities that may be helpful to many entities. NASA anticipates incentivizing the successful support of external customers but anticipates little to no active recruitment of new customers due to the expected high utilization of the NBL during the period of performance of NOC II. However, NASA wants to ensure that new customers can be recruited if utilization falls below expected levels. Note that NASA anticipates significant changes to the External Customer metrics and incentives under the NOC II requirement from those in the attached NOC SOW and DRDs.

**The pertinent contract information for the current contract is as follows:**

* Current Contractor: Raytheon Company
* Contract Number: 80JSC017C0001
* Estimated Contract Value: Approximately $160M
* Contract Expiration Date: September 30, 2024

**Capability Statement:**

Interested firms having the required capabilities necessary to meet the above requirement should indicate the ability to perform all aspects of the effort, and include the following information:

1. *Technical* - Describe your company's overall skills, experience, and capabilities to perform the work of the current NOC SOW. Please identify specific SOW sections where your company could provide the stated capability by way of Attachment 1 - Vendor Capability Matrix at the end of this announcement. If subcontracting or if a joint venture is anticipated, organizations should address the anticipated administrative and management structure of such arrangements (if this information is known at this time). Also address what elements of work would be performed by the prime or joint venture partners and which elements would be performed by subcontractors.

2*. Small Business* – If this contract is not set aside, identify any areas of the current NOC SOW that you believe could be performed by a small business and provide rationale.

3. *General* –

1. What additional documents would you like to see on the NOC II contract website or included in the Technical Library?
2. What barriers or obstacles do you foresee to potentially bidding on this contract? Can you identify any Government acquisition approaches that would increase the competitiveness of this procurement?
3. Considering the extension of ISS Operations through 2030, and other NASA programs and missions on the horizon, what are the potential advantages of a contract period of performance beyond 5 years? Are there any disadvantages?
4. Due to NBL limited excess capacity, NASA anticipates little to no active recruitment of new external customers. What flexible incentive mechanisms would you suggest that would enable NASA to incentivize future recruitment of external customers if unanticipated excess capacity became available?
5. NBL divers and other operations personnel bring tremendous value to human spaceflight through their training and experience. With increasing opportunities in commercial space and other related fields, recruitment and retention of these highly skilled operators is crucial.
6. How can the contract be structured to best enable this?
7. What are industry best practices, including any innovations or efficiencies and added value?
8. What were the lessons learned from other industries or agencies?
9. What innovations might you propose in the performance of this contract or contract structure?
10. Provide feedback and rationale on any other topics, factors, and/or items of interest you would like to address regarding this potential procurement.

4. Company-Specific Information - Responses must include the following:

a. Name and address of the firm’s Point of Contact information (include DUNS number, address, phone, and email)

b. Size of business

i. Average annual revenue for past three years

ii. Number of employees

iii. Whether the firm is a Large, SB, Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB), HUBZone, WOSB, Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB), SDVOSB, HBCU/MI, and/or 8a

c. Number of years in business

d. Affiliate information: parent company, joint venture partners, and potential teaming partners

e. If you plan to propose as a prime or as a subcontractor

f. A list of contracts covering the past three years with emphasis on work performed for the United States Federal Government. Please provide contract numbers, if your firm was a prime or subcontractor, contract type, dollar value of each procurement, and customer point of contact (address, phone, and email). If work was performed as a subcontractor, please indicate percentage of work/subcontract dollar value. If the contract(s) were IDIQ, please indicate the number of task orders awarded and the total dollar value of those task orders.

NASA Clause 1852.215-84, Ombudsman, is applicable. The JSC Center Ombudsman for this acquisition can be found at <https://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/regs/Procurement-Ombuds-Comp-Advocate-Listing.pdf>

**Organizational Conflicts of Interest (OCI):**

In addition to the information requested above, NASA is requesting information from industry regarding potential OCI arising from the NOC II acquisition.

The nature of the work anticipated under the NOC II may create the potential for OCI as currently described in FAR Subpart 9.5. Each interested party should review FAR Subpart 9.5 in light of NASA’s anticipation of OCI issues and consider carefully the extent to which an OCI may arise before making the decision to compete for NOC II.

Specifically, NASA anticipates the effort under NOC II will include the following types of tasks, which could lead to potential OCI issues:

* Provide assessments of the safety or readiness of commercial suit vendors to integrate and perform testing in the NBL
* Potential access to data from other commercial companies or government agencies acquired through integrating and assessing the safety of hardware put into the NBL for testing, training, or evaluation
* Potential access to assessment data for hardware tested, trained, or evaluated in the NBL
* Access to Government Sensitive Information such as pre-decisional information associated with on-going or future NASA projects that may result in future competitive procurements

These types of tasks could lead to the following categories of OCI issues depending on the composition of the team selected for the anticipated NOC II contract:

* Unequal access to nonpublic information of the type that may provide the NOC II contractor an unfair competitive advantage in a later competition for a Government procurement contract
* Potential impaired objectivity if the NOC II contractor or its subcontractors are assessing data developed by themselves, related companies (e.g. affiliates, joint ventures, partnerships, etc.), or subcontractor

A link to the NASA’s Guide on Organizational Conflicts of Interest is below:  
<https://nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/nasa_organizational_conflicts_of_interest.pdf>

Please reference this document for additional information about NASA’s policies with respect to OCI issues. Interested parties are requested to address the following questions:

1. What type(s) of OCI issues would your company or potential team identify, if any, should you choose to propose on the NOC II contract?
2. What strategies would you anticipate proposing to mitigate the OCI issues that you identified (if any)? Please provide strategy details, previous examples/experience with other contracts with NASA or other agencies, etc.
3. Are there any other types of potential OCI issues with the proposed NOC II contract that were not identified in this RFI?
4. Does your company foresee any OCI issues associated with the NOC II that would cause you to decide not to propose on the potential NOC II Request for Proposal (RFP)? If so, please explain.

NASA will review any responses received regarding potential OCI and each offeror’s proposed OCI mitigation strategy. Companies are cautioned to consider OCI when responding to this RFI, and to

consider internal mitigation measures that would prevent OCI from adversely affecting a

company’s future procurement prospects. NASA is not in a position to respond to Offerors on the existence of OCI or remedial measures. Subsequent to the initial OCI submission the Government will not consider further information as it relates to this RFI. The Offerors will still be required to comply with the RFP OCI requirements and its OCI submission will be considered in accordance with the RFP.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**

NASA JSC is seeking capability statements from all interested parties, including all socioeconomic categories of Small Businesses and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)/Minority Institutions (MI), and members of the underserved communities as defined by Executive Order (EO) 13985, Advancing Racial Equity And Support For Underserved Communities Through The Federal Government, for the purposes of determining the appropriate level of competition and/or small business subcontracting goals for NOC II.

Additionally, in support of EO 13985, NASA is seeking to advance equity or remove barriers for members of underserved communities related to this requirement. As defined in the EO, Underserved Communities refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity." Equity means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

NASA seeks input in the following areas:

1. To support the requirements identified in this request for information (RFI)/sources sought notification, what barriers or opportunities exist to engage subject matter experts from industry and academia and how can those barriers be overcome? How can underserved communities be leveraged?
2. To support the requirements identified in this RFI, what barriers or opportunities exist to partner with subcontractors that employ members of underserved communities, as defined above?
3. What other recommendations would you make to enhance diversity and inclusion?
4. What should be considered to encourage full participation and contribution of organizations and individuals (e.g. outreach efforts and innovative partnerships) in performance of this requirement?

The documents on the NASA procurement website are for information and planning purposes, to allow industry the opportunity to comment, and to promote competition only. NASA will not affirmatively release any information received in response to this RFI to the public but may use information received in developing the best approach for a contract strategy, and therefore such information may be recognizable to the interested party who submitted it.

**Submission Instructions:**

Interested firms having the required capabilities necessary to meet the NOC II requirement described

herein should submit a capability statement of no more than 20 pages, using no less than 12-point Times New Roman font indicating the ability to perform all aspects of the effort. The Vendor Capability Matrix will be included within the 20-page limitation.

The OCI Mitigation Plan should be submitted as an additional document. There is no page limitation to the OCI Mitigation Plan submittal.

Interested parties who consider themselves qualified to perform one or more elements of the Statement of Work are invited to submit a response to this Sources Sought Notice/RFI by **5:00 p.m. CST on** **March 06, 2023**. All responses under this Sources Sought Notice/RFI must be emailed to [**jsc-noc2@mail.nasa.gov**](mailto:jsc-noc2@mail.nasa.gov)**.** Please reference 80JSC023NOC02 in any response.

An Interested Vendors List is enabled within this posting. This list is available to other vendors to allow potential offerors the opportunity to network. Parties that would like their information posted to the Interested Vendors List shall use the “Add Me to Interested Vendors” button. If a vendor would like to be removed from the Interested Vendors List, use the “Remove Me from Interested Vendors” button. It is the potential offeror’s responsibility to monitor this site for the release of any solicitation or synopsis.

This synopsis is for information and planning purposes only and there is no solicitation at this time. This request for capability information does not constitute a request for proposals and submission of any information in response to this market survey is purely voluntary. The government assumes no financial responsibility for any costs incurred and the respondents will not be notified of the results of the evaluation. If a solicitation is released it will be synopsized in Sam.gov. Interested firms are responsible for monitoring this website and <https://www.nasa.gov/jsc/procurement/noc2> for the release of any solicitation or synopsis.

The Government intends to review the responses submitted by industry. **Please do not submit proprietary information. Data that is marked "proprietary" will not be reviewed.** No evaluation letters and/or results will be issued to the respondents. The data will not be shared outside the Government, but may be used to develop future requirements, refine requirements, and/or develop the best approach for any contract strategy.