

GSA VETS 2: Are there implications for Alliant 2?

By Lisa Pafe

The General Services Administration (GSA) released the Veterans Technology Services 2 (VETS 2) RFP on April 21. GSA plans to make awards to the top 70 Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) that qualify. The RFP has notable similarities to the Alliant 2 draft RFPs and to the OASIS RFP (currently on-ramping in certain pools). GSA is continuing its drive for an objective evaluation methodology with the use of self-scoring.

However, the VETS 2 RFP has two notable differences from the other RFPs:

1. It allows the use of contractor teaming arrangements at the vehicle level.
2. It allows bidders to use relevant experience and past performance accomplished as either a prime or a subcontractor.

While both OASIS and the draft Alliant 2 RFP allow no points for teaming partner past performance, GSA VETS 2 allows up to 10,000 additional points for teaming with caveats (this represents 10% of the total possible 100,000 points). The joint venture (JV) or partnership relationship must be an existing one managed by the SDVOSB. For existing prime-subcontractor relationships, all parties must be classified as small businesses under the 54152 NAICS code. For teams that qualify, the bidder may then use the team's relevant experience and past performance examples.

Allowing the prime bidder to use its own relevant experience performed either as a prime or subcontractor is another huge boost for SDVOSBs—the vast majority of which are unlikely to have the requisite 10 prime contracts over \$500,000. It could mean the difference between a very low score and one that places the bidder in the top 70 or tied at the bottom (tying at 70 wins an award).

Why this sudden change of heart for GSA with regard to teaming at the vehicle level and allowing bidders to reference work performed as a subcontractor?

One school of thought is that GSA VETS 2 is a special type of vehicle aimed at disadvantaged bidders that need this latitude. Another is that the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requires agencies to evaluate the past performance and qualifications of team members and JV partners during the solicitation process. DoD and defense-related agencies combined are the second largest users of VETS (the VA is first) and may have pressured GSA to make these changes.

Interestingly, on the same day that GSA issued VETS 2, John Cavadias, Alliant 2 Procurement Contracting Officer (PCO), released a blog post on GSA Interact to “help answer a few of the general questions that are on the minds of potential offerors and interested parties.”

In addition to notifying bidders that final RFPs for Alliant 2 Unrestricted and Alliant 2 SB would not be released until the second half of June, he cautioned bidders that “it is absolutely not recommended” to use the draft RFP templates and that “the probability of significant changes made from DRFPs to the official RFPs is very high.”

Does this mean that GSA will make similar changes to the Alliant 2 RFPs? DoD and defense-related agencies have been the largest users of Alliant SB in particular, so perhaps changes are in the works for at least the small business set-aside RFP. Only time will tell, but the release of VETS 2 has certainly started conversations around the beltway.

This article was originally published April 28, 2016 in WashingtonTechnology.com.