

Source Selection Statement for NASA Support for Atmospheric Sciences Acquisition

RFP NNG11313056R

On February 28, 2012, I, along with senior officials from Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) met with the Source Evaluation Board (SEB) appointed to evaluate proposals in connection with the Support for Atmospheric Sciences (SAS) acquisition. At the conclusion of the meeting, I requested that the SEB re-look at two findings identified by the Associate Chief of Procurement related to the Software Innovation and Visualization Office (SIVO) work for SSAI's proposal evaluation. On March 14, 2012, I had a final meeting with the SEB and senior GSFC officials to make my source selection decision.

Procurement History

The purpose of the SAS contract is to provide scientific support services to design, develop, test, maintain, calibrate and operate suborbital instruments for atmospheric and solar observations, process and analyze data, and document computer models that describe Earth system processes, specifically in three key areas: (1) Instrumentation, (2) Data Processing and (3) Analysis and Earth System Modeling. Additionally support will be provided to scientists to aid in the implementation, formulation and operation of satellite missions, preparation of research proposals and refereed journal publications and manuscripts, specifically in the non key areas of (1) Documentation and Presentation, (2) Mission Science and (3) Education and Public Outreach. This contract shall support the full scope of the GSFC research and technology development program for studying the Earth's atmosphere. The contract shall also support computing and software engineering efforts for NASA-funded researchers using high end computing resources.

The SAS Request for Proposal (RFP) was released on May 16, 2011, and subsequent amendments were issued.

The contract is a Cost Plus Fixed Fee (CPFF) Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract with an effective ordering period of 5 years from date of award which includes a 45 day phase-in period.

This procurement was conducted as a Small Business Set-Aside under NAICS code 541712 with a size standard of 1,000 employees in accordance with FAR Part 15.3, entitled "Source Selection."

Proposals Submitted

On July 7, 2011 NASA received timely proposals from the following five companies.

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| ADNET Systems, Inc. |
| Caelum Research Corporation |

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| I.M. Systems, Inc. (IMSG) |
| Science Systems and Applications Inc. (SSAI) |
| Science and Technology Corp. (STC) |

Evaluation Procedures and Summary Results

The SEB evaluated proposals in accordance with the source selection procedures identified in Federal Acquisitions Regulation (FAR) part 15.3, NASA FAR Supplements (NFS 1815.3) and (NFS 1815.304-70(b) (1)) and the RFP evaluation criteria. The RFP listed three evaluation factors, Mission Suitability, Past Performance, and Cost. The RFP specified the relative order of importance of these factors as follows:

The Cost Factor is significantly less important than the combined importance of the Mission Suitability Factor and the Past Performance Factor. As individual Factors, Mission Suitability Factor is the most important, and the Past Performance Factor is more important than the Cost Factor.

Mission Suitability has three subfactors as follows: Understanding the Requirements and Technical Approach, Representative Task Order (RTO), and Management Plan/Capabilities. The Mission Suitability subfactors were weighted and scored on a 1000 point scale as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|---|------|
| Subfactor A | Understanding the Requirements and Technical Approach | 350 |
| Subfactor B | Representative Task Order | 200 |
| Subfactor C | Management Plan/Capabilities | 450 |
| | TOTAL | 1000 |

The Mission Suitability subfactors were evaluated using the adjectival rating, definitions, and percentile ranges at NFS 1815.305(a) (3) (A). The maximum points available for each subfactor were multiplied by the assessed percent for each subfactor to derive the score for the particular subfactor.

As individual subfactors, Subfactor C –Management Plan was more important than Subfactor A-Understanding the Requirements and Technical Approach, and Subfactor A is more important than Subfactor B-Representative Task Order (RTO).

After weighting and scoring the findings for the individual subfactors according to the RFP, the SEB team assigned numerical scoring to proposals under the “Mission Suitability” factor.

The proposed costs were evaluated for reasonableness and cost realism in accordance with FAR Part 15.305(a) (1) and NFS Part 1815.305(a) (1) (B), in order to determine the offeror’s probable

cost. Adjustments were made to the proposed cost to reflect the probable cost to the Government.

Past Performance evaluations were conducted in accordance with provision M.5 of the solicitation. As stated in provision L.17, the past performance record indicates the relevant quantitative and qualitative aspects of performing services or delivering products similar in size, content, and/or complexity to the requirements of this acquisition. Past Performance information sources included: offeror-provided past performance information, offeror’s customer-provided past performance questionnaires, information obtained from Government past performance databases as well as interviews with the offeror’s customers and government personnel.

Past Performance was not numerically scored; however, a confidence rating was assigned. The applicable level of confidence ratings were: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low and Neutral, as set forth and described in Section M.5 of the solicitation and NFS 1815.305(a)(2)(A).

As a result of the evaluation process, the final Mission Suitability Subfactor ratings are summarized below:

| Offeror | Subfactor A – Understanding Requirement and Technical Approach | Subfactor B – Representative Task Order | Subfactor C- Management Plan/Capabilities |
|---------|--|---|---|
| ADNET | Fair | Poor | Fair |
| Caelum | Fair | Fair | Fair |
| IMSG | Poor | Poor | Poor |
| SSAI | Excellent | Excellent | Very Good |
| STC | Fair | Fair | Fair |

Detailed Results of the Evaluation

MISSION SUITABILITY FACTOR

SSAI

Subfactor A: Understanding the requirements and technical approach

SSAI received 2 significant strengths, 2 strengths, no significant weaknesses, no weaknesses and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of **Excellent** for this subfactor.

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH #1: DEEP AND THOROUGH DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The offeror’s proposal demonstrates an especially deep and thorough understanding of Data Processing and Analysis, a key functional area of the SAS SOW. Data provided in the proposal

gives an integrated view of the interconnections among all SOW requirements in the area of Data Processing and Analysis, which demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the contract requirements. They also provide a perceptive list of the critical issues and challenges to the future of SAS Data Processing and Analysis such as increasing data rates and volumes. This list shows a solid understanding of the challenging services required to meet the scientific objectives of the SOW.

The offeror also demonstrates a detailed and thorough understanding of the services needed for Algorithm Development. For instance, the offeror recognizes important differences between algorithm development for specialized scientific applications and for general operational applications. Furthermore, the offeror demonstrates that it deals effectively with real-world issues of satellite data processing, by reformatting diverse inputs, ingesting ancillary information, ensuring geo-location and calibration, verifying that results are numerically accurate and physically meaningful, dealing with interruption of data flow, validation of software with simulated data sets, and using and generating quality flags.

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH #2: EXCELLENT UNDERSTANDING OF INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The offeror's proposal shows an excellent understanding of the importance of instrument development to mission goals, as such they demonstrates the capability to provide a high level of instrument support. The offeror demonstrates a thorough understanding of the importance of field measurements. They provide an excellent description of the steps required in a field mission, from planning and operations through data storage and publication of the results. They describe an effective skill mix which is well-balanced between scientists, engineers, programmers and technicians. The proposal lists a number of important, emerging skills required in the future, viz. *"robotics, miniaturization; large data set storage/manipulation, quick-looks; innovative calibration techniques."*

Their approach to instrument and staff development improves efficiency, is cost effective, facilitates experienced and knowledgeable personnel, and prevents easily avoided failures. The offeror further demonstrates a thorough understanding of the importance of field measurements, and they also understand that software development is as critical to a successful instrument as the hardware. Thus, the offeror's attention to software quality as a component of instrument quality is of significant value to the Government.

STRENGTH #1: CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SKILLS TO SUPPORT KEY FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

The offeror demonstrates a clear understanding of the requirements for scientific and technical skills to support the key functional requirements in the SAS SOW. The offeror's technical and scientific expertise provides additional value to the Government. The offeror understands very

well that the ultimate purpose of the Laboratory for Atmospheres is to: *“Conceive and develop instruments and missions that observe the earth system; calibrate, validate, and analyze the data those instruments deliver to produce discoveries that re-write textbooks; and provide the fundamental insights that come from understanding how a variety of interconnected systems combine to form Earth’s dynamic environment.”*

STRENGTH #2: DETAILED UNDERSTANDING OF THE SERVICES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT EARTH SYSTEM MODELING AND ANALYSIS

The offeror’s proposal demonstrates a detailed understanding of the services required to support the key functional area of Earth System Modeling and Analysis. They recognize that *“Earth System Models are today’s best tools for testing hypotheses about climate change and for deducing the role each component process plays”* This statement reflects a clear understanding of an important scientific objective of modeling within the SAS contract.

Subfactor B: Representative Task Order (RTO)

SSAI received 1 significant strength, no strengths, no weaknesses, no significant weaknesses, and no deficiencies resulting in an adjectival rating of Excellent for this subfactor.

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH #1: EXCELLENT TASK PLAN TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION-SUPPORT AND SPECIFIC SUBTASK REQUIREMENTS OF THE RTO

The offeror presents an excellent task plan to accomplish the mission-support and specific subtask requirements of the SAS RTO. The high-quality response demonstrates greatly enhanced potential for successful performance of complex R&D tasks under the SAS contract.

The offeror proposed a well-organized, sensibly detailed, logical, coherent, and thorough approach to the RTO development tasks using a 3-level work breakdown structure (WBS) with 30 functions structured along the lines of pre- and post-launch tasks. Each function is discussed with a clear understanding of the issues and challenges involved. The offeror’s comprehensive WBS structure shows they understand very well the complex nature of the problem and the tasks necessary to successfully support it. The assumptions used for the RTO, which guide the WBS organization, are clearly stated by the offeror with technical references. Their well-researched assumptions show a deep understanding of the RTO.

The offeror recognizes the necessity and desirability of working with the instrument science team, especially in their discussion of improvements to the operational algorithms. Furthermore, the offeror meets challenges by proposing novel courses-of-action going above and beyond the RTO specifications. For example: minimizing data processing dealing with nighttime aerosols; looking at various groupings of ARIES pixels; and optimizing retrievals. Such innovations show a confidence and level of creativity that bodes well for future performance.

Subfactor C: Management Plan/Capabilities

SSAI received 1 significant strength, 2 strengths, 1 weakness, no significant weaknesses, and no deficiencies resulting in an adjectival rating of Very Good for this subfactor.

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH #1: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE STAFFING PLAN

The offeror proposes a highly effective, proven staffing plan that highlights their ability to identify, hire, motivate and retain top-notch scientific and technical staff.

The offeror proposes a multi-pronged recruitment approach. Group Leads play a central role, using their domain-specific knowledge, long-term experience staffing atmospheric science contracts, and extensive contacts in professional organizations and academia. Viewing its employees as their “best ambassadors and recruiters,” the offeror encourages and rewards referrals through their generous bonus program. The offeror recognizes that recruitment for SAS is a continual process, thus, they employ dedicated recruiter. They select new employees with great care, finding it “*important that candidates not only qualify technically, but also fit within and complement the team.*” The offeror’s proven approach to recruiting skilled scientific and technical staff is highly effective, and provides significant additional value to the Government.

The offeror also proposes a host of strategies to motivate and retain their skilled scientific and technical staff. They offer to provide a formal Mentoring Program that pairs well-qualified new staff members with experienced senior staff who provide hands-on training. Not only is this program a cost-effective strategy for training the next generation of Goddard scientists, but it exemplifies the nurturing environment the offeror provides, which is effective in attracting, motivating and retaining the highest caliber new staff.

STRENGTH #1: WELL DEVELOPED METHOD FOR INITIATING AND MANAGING TASK ORDERS.

The offeror presents a well-developed method for initiating and managing task orders which offers savings to the Government in both time and administrative costs. Their approach to the management of multiple tasks is based on their Task Management System. They use a consistent set of effective and documented work practices that create measurable records for monitoring work progress and performance throughout the task order life cycle. The offeror’s expert approach to task order management offers benefits such as cost reduction, rapid initiation times for new task orders, and a reduced administrative load. The combination of a mature, streamlined Task Management System, and the understanding of the requirements for effective multi-task management, demonstrates a well-managed system to organize, provide staff for, and manage risks for a large number of complex tasks.

STRENGTH #2: VERY GOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH PLAN

The Safety and Health Plan submitted in support of SAS related activities shows a very good understanding and familiarity of OSHA, NASA, and GSFC safety directives and requirements. The plan addresses hazards, training requirements, and precautions for activities to be performed during field campaigns, as well as precautions for activities involving aircraft (Range Safety Program) which shows their familiarity with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.

WEAKNESS #1: LACK OF DISCUSSION OF THE TRANSITION OF STAFFING, MANAGEMENT AND COMPENSATION FOR HIGH-END COMPUTING TASKS

The offeror's proposal lacks a discussion of how the technically challenging software optimization and high-end computing tasks transitioning from the current SIVO contract will be staffed, managed, and compensated.

ADNET SYSTEMS, Inc.

Subfactor A: Understanding the requirements and technical approach

ADNET received no significant strengths, 2 strengths, 1 weakness, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: UNDERSTANDS THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIAL TECHNICAL SKILLS IN SUPORT OF LASER-BASED INSTRUMENTS AND LABORATORIES.

The offeror fully understands the requirements for special technical skills as described in the SOW in support of the SAS laser-based instruments and laboratories. They present a very good discussion of many of the critical issues in providing laser instrumental services in the R&D environment of the Lab for Atmospheres. These issues include: site support, calibration drivers, budget fluctuations, access to technical expertise, collaboration arrangements, project teams, and linkage to space-based instruments. They also demonstrate their understanding of specific applications for lidar instruments in SAS R&D, and the capabilities to mitigate the risk of an inability of available GSFC facilities to meet a surge in facility and/or staffing requirements for laser labs. This enhances the potential for successful performance in the development and operations of SAS laser instruments for atmospheric sensing.

STRENGTH #2: UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERTISE IN SUPPORTING THE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS.

The offeror has skills, understanding and expertise in supporting the preparation and development of research proposals, which exceed the requirements in this non-key functional area.

WEAKNESS #1: INADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING FOR DEVELOPING, SUPPORTING, AND FIELDING ACTIVE AND PASSIVE MICROWAVE AND OPTICAL INSTRUMENTS.

The offeror's proposal presents an inadequate understanding of SAS requirements for developing, supporting, and fielding active and passive microwave and optical instruments used for remote sensing of the atmosphere. The proposal also presents an inadequate understanding of safety & health requirements for some SAS-specific instrument and laboratory hazards.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #1: POOR UNDERSTANDING OF SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR DATA ANALYSIS.

The offeror presents a poor understanding of the support requirements for SAS Data Analysis to provide the scientific thought and creativity needed to define, test and document algorithms, datasets, procedures and methodologies.

The offeror fails to demonstrate an understanding that much of SAS support in data analysis is intrinsically scientific research and development. It lacks the required detail in this key functional area. The offeror's lack of understanding is highlighted in the examples below:

The offeror lists challenges in the area of data analysis that can be called scientific challenges, and proposes inadequate, inappropriate, non-scientific mitigation strategies for them.

The proposed mitigation of the challenge that "identification of long-term trends often involves multiple mission data sets" is to "reuse existing algorithms and use common software libraries and test data sets." The offeror misses the point that identifying trends is a quite difficult scientific problem in general and almost always demands much more than simple, canned software solutions.

The proposed mitigation of the challenges of "proper validation of data sets" and "comparison of legacy sensor data with that of new missions" is to "apply automated validation using statistical techniques to account for differences in spatial & temporal coverage, spectral passbands, calibration drift." Again, this trivializes a difficult scientific problem, treating the challenges of validation and inter-comparison of data sets as if they could be handled in a generic fashion, by an automated technique, without scientific thought or creativity.

Subfactor B: Representative Task Order (RTO)

ADNET Systems Inc. received no significant strengths, no strengths, no weaknesses, no significant weaknesses, and 1 deficiency, resulting in an adjectival rating of Poor for this subfactor.

DEFICIENCY #1: POORLY ADDRESSES CRITICAL SUB-TASKS FOR THE RTO

The offeror's plan for the RTO poorly addresses critical sub-tasks which involve research and development, treating the effort as a generic software engineering problem, rather than a complex process requiring close interaction with GSFC scientists. The proposed level of staffing is inadequate, and the skill mix is inappropriate. WBS sub-tasks and deliverables are not described. The proposal reflects a material failure of the offeror to understand the work, for a complex SAS task order.

The offeror's does not demonstrate a detailed understanding of the technical challenges required by the RTO. The description of the technical approach and WBS table contain generalities and mostly paraphrases the RTO. (Critical R&D sub-tasks required in the RTO were poorly addressed). The offeror does not adequately demonstrate a detailed understanding of a complex R&D effort. Furthermore, the proposal has inadequate recognition of the need for guidance by the science working group in studying, implementing, and optimizing science issues. The task plan treats the specific scientific problem as a generic software engineering problem.

The offeror's proposed staffing level is inadequate for the amount of work to be done to optimize joint performance by two of NASA's most complex sensors against a long list of radiometric challenges. As such, the offeror fails to recognize the skill mix needed to conduct the work. Therefore, the proposed task plan is significantly understaffed with active senior scientists who would be needed to carry out all the R&D studies required by the RTO.

Subfactor C: Management Plan/Capabilities

ADNET Systems, Inc. received no significant strengths, 2 strengths, 1 weakness, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: DETAIL PLAN FOR RAPID PHASE-IN

The offeror presents detailed plans for rapid phase-in with a smooth and efficient transition. They present a convincing step-by-step process that includes use of "*a dedicated, integrated Management Team,*" and the proposed plan would provide a smooth and efficient transition of the incumbent staff.

STRENGTH #2: WELL-DEFINED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The offeror presents a risk management plan that is well-defined, complete and orderly. It allows for anyone inclusive of any employee or Government ATR or Resource Analyst who is involved in a task to identify a risk. Task level risks will be managed through their sophisticated Risk Management feature which maps each risk to the appropriate level.

WEAKNESS #1: INADEQUATE SAFETY AND HEALTH PLAN

The offeror's proposal presents an inadequate Safety & Health plan for the instrument and laboratory hazards in the Laboratory for Atmospheres. The proposal contained some sections that are irrelevant to SAS, such as blood biohazard management and radioactive materials. Consequently it shows little awareness of the hazardous conditions and materials in the Laboratory for Atmospheres.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #1: INCONGRUOUS STAFFING BETWEEN PRIME AND SUBCONTRACTOR.

The offeror's proposed balance of hiring between the prime and their subcontractors is incongruous with the staffing requirements of the SAS SOW. Interactions and business relationships between the offeror and its subcontractors are poorly specified.

The offeror, with no claimed scientific research competence, is allocated most of the work, however, its subcontractors have the competent R&D staff, and as such the business relationship between the teaming companies is poorly specified. The proposed teaming arrangement involving three subcontractors is complex, and the proposal lacks a detailed description of the controls required for successful contract performance. The proposal states that the subcontractors are members of the offeror's "Integrated Program Team" and that their inclusion and expertise will provide increased performance and efficiency. However, the proposal provides little detail about how this arrangement would work in practice.

CAELUM

Subfactor A: Understanding the Requirements and technical approach

Caelum received no significant strengths, 1 strength, 1 weakness, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor

STRENGTH #1: UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIREMENTS FOR EARTH SYSTEM MODELING AND ANALYSIS AND REQUIRED SERVICES

The offeror demonstrates clear understanding of the SOW requirements for Earth System Modeling and Analysis, and of the nature of the required support services. They also demonstrates good understanding of more detailed technical requirements for SAS model development and data assimilation

WEAKNESS #1: LITTLE R&D SUPPORT RELEVANT TO KEY FUNCTIONAL AREAS OF CONTRACT

The offeror has little R&D support expertise that is relevant to the SAS key functional areas. Their successful phase-in experience on four recent Government support contracts were for operational support services, not R&D. Also, their demonstrated support expertise is in

operational engineering services are not evidence of expertise appropriate to SAS R&D functional areas.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKENESS #1: POOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THE SUPPORT SERVICES REQUIRED FOR SUB-ORBITAL INSTRUMENTATION

The offeror demonstrates a poor understanding of the nature of the support services required for sub-orbital instrumentation under the SAS contract, and has proposed a significantly inadequate skill mix for this key area.

The offeror demonstrates a lack of understanding of the nature of laser instruments to be supported through the SAS contract, and they demonstrates a general misunderstanding of the importance of several laser characteristics that enable useful lidar measurements. They propose an inadequate skill mix for the Instrumentation functional area. Support scientists are not proposed, but are required for instrument development and for algorithm development. They also failed to understand that with small, sub-orbital tasks, personnel should be cross-trained to perform multiple tasks in the SAS instrument labs.

The offeror proposed Instrument Design and Development lacks reference to the importance of instrument control software as part of the instrument development process. This is a critical part of instrument development which needs to be considered from the outset, particularly since many SAS instruments are designed for autonomous operation.

The discussion of algorithm development for data acquisition and processing does not adequately demonstrate an understanding that the development of data acquisition algorithms is an important part of instrument support. The contractor is expected to support the R&D nature of data processing and analysis, not just run supplied programs.

Subfactor B: Representative Task Order (RTO)

Caelum received no significant strengths, 1 strength, no weaknesses, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: GOOD UNDERSTANDING, GOOD TASK PLANNING AND STAFF ACUMEN OF RTO

The offeror's RTO plan shows good broad-brush understanding, good task planning, and some staffing acumen. Their overview of the RTO shows a good understanding of the ARIES concept and why the resolution of small scale features would be important to numerical weather prediction modeling.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKENESS #1: PARAPHRASES RTO SUBTASKS WITH LITTLE TECHNICAL DETAIL OR METHODOLOGY.

The offeror's discussions of R&D subtasks mostly paraphrase the RTO with little technical detail. The vital tasks to generate proxy data for developing a retrieval methodology lack understanding. There are staffing inadequacies and little risk analysis.

The proposal frequently paraphrases the RTO, rather than presenting a detailed understanding of the technical objectives and challenges posed by the RTO beyond the general issues normally posed by the requirements of the SOW. This shows a superficial understanding of the required tasks. The technical discussion of the vital task to generate proxy data shows a lack of understanding. The offeror proposes to generate not proxy but simulated ARIES data, using AIRS and MODIS products and ARIES/HIVIS radiative transfer codes provided by the government. Simulated data is very different from proxy data. The RTO risk analysis is inadequate. For instance, it fails to include typical issues like late delivery of code or staff turnover during the 5-year mission, also the offeror's staffing is inadequate to accomplish the RTO.

Subfactor C: Management Plan/Capabilities

Caelum received no significant strengths, 1 strength, 1 weakness, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: WELL ORGANIZED PHASE-IN PLAN

The offeror's proposal presents a well-organized Phase-In Plan loaded with additional staff and pre-award activities as risk mitigation. They present a comprehensive overview of the factors and functions required during Phase-In, grouped by: tasks, technical process, staffing, business process, procedures, and facilities, and they clearly recognize the risk of disruption at contract-transition and proposes significant pre-award mitigation activities.

WEAKNESS #1: INADEQUATE RESOURCES

The offeror's resources are inadequately described, which increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance, particularly during Phase-In. The offeror failed to demonstrate that sufficient financial resources are available to cover incurred phase-in costs. Such low reserves, on the order of one month's cash-flow in the SAS contract, are inadequate to cover corporate phase-in expenses as well as ongoing task costs during the take-over of the incumbent contract.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #1: POORLY ORGANIZED PROGRAM MANAGEMENT OFFICE THAT IS INADEQUATELY STAFFED.

The offeror's proposed Program Management Office is poorly organized and inadequately staffed only by part-time managers, with many time-consuming responsibilities assigned to top management.

The proposed Program Management Office (PMO) is staffed by a part-time Program Manager (PM) and a part-time Deputy PM (DPM). This presents a significant risk for a contract the size and complexity of the SAS Contract. The SAS contract is not merely a follow-on LAS contract; there are several additions to the existing LAS contract with more skills and tasks required. Part-time management is clearly inadequate for a contract of this size, scope and complexity. The PM and DPM will only spend 60% of their time as the PM and DPM. The remaining 40% will be providing support within GSFC under a different contract. They will also assume several specialized SAS contract responsibilities which require technical training and expertise. These are potentially time-consuming and will detract from their management of the SAS contract.

IMSG

Subfactor A: Understanding the Requirements and technical approach

IMSG received 1 significant strength, 1 strength, no weakness, 1 significant weakness, and 1 deficiency, resulting in an adjectival rating of Poor for this subfactor.

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH #1: THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING AND SIGNIFICANT EXPERTISE IN SUPORT FOR EARTH SYSTEM MODELING AND ANALYSIS.

The offeror demonstrates a thorough understanding of and significant expertise in support services for Earth System Modeling and Analysis, one of the three key functional areas of the SOW. The offeror is well aware of many of the models developed and used in the Laboratory for Atmospheres, discussing and summarizing them thoroughly. The offeror demonstrates expertise in the development and application of relevant coupled models. Additionally, they provides a knowledgeable discussion of each of the twenty SOW requirements in Earth System Modeling and Analysis, as well as a deep and thorough discussion of ongoing model-based scientific research and the support required for sensor simulation studies and for data assimilation.

STRENGTH #1: GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD OPERATIONS

The offeror's discussion of instrument development and field operations shows a good understanding of the nature of support for instrumentation, thus they propose a flexible approach to managing the risks experienced during an instrument development lifecycle.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKENESS #1: DOES NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT DETAIL IN SOME INSTRUMENT/LABORARY SUPORT AREAS AND FAILS TO ADDRESS THE TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED.

The offeror's proposal does not provide sufficient detail in some instrument/laboratory support areas, and fails to address either the technical skills required or how those skills would be acquired. The offeror's proposal presents a grossly inadequate understanding of the SAS-specific

safety and health requirements to support the sub-orbital atmospheric instruments and laboratories at GSFC.

The offeror provided inadequate detail to permit evaluation in some parts of the Instrumental functional area, as such; the offeror's proposal fails to address either the technical skills required or how those skills would be acquired. This is a serious oversight on the offeror's part. Furthermore the subcontractor designated by the offeror as the lead company for Instrumentation lacks the laser experience and capabilities required. Because of the importance of laser technology within the SAS contract, this lack of relevant experience in the laser support area appreciably increases the risk for unsuccessful contract performance. Without some recognition of the specific nature of the required SAS instrument support, the offeror does not adequately demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in this area.

They also inadequately discuss the importance of software development for the operation of the instrument and acquisition of geophysical data. As such, the failure to demonstrate an understanding of software as a critical part of instrument development further increases the risk of unsuccessful performance in this area.

DEFICIENCY #1: FAILS TO DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS.

The offeror fails to demonstrate an understanding that SAS Data Processing and Analysis is a fundamentally scientific research-oriented function to be carried out in collaboration with government scientists. This material failure of understanding in a key functional area of the SAS SOW increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance to an unacceptable level.

The offeror's understanding of the services required to support algorithm development for SAS data processing and analysis is incomplete and inadequate. The offeror fails to recognize that algorithm development for SAS data processing and analysis is a research-intensive effort that requires a deep understanding of the physical problem at hand, a sophisticated understanding of cutting-edge numerical methods, and the creativity to solve scientific problems that haven't been solved before. Instead, the offeror discusses the SOW requirements for algorithm development only in the most rudimentary and generic of terms. The offeror's presentation of algorithm development as a mere input/output process increases the risk of unsuccessful performance to an unacceptable level in this key functional area.

The offeror also fails to demonstrate the ability to recommend and apply appropriate software standards. Likewise, the offeror declares that "*All code developments will follow coding standards specified by the COTR or ATRs*" But, the COTR and ATRs do not specify coding standards in SAS. The SOW is clear that it is the responsibility of the contractor to do so. The offeror fails to recognize its responsibility for the SOW requirement to establish coding standards. This lack of understanding appreciably increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.

Subfactor B: Representative Task Order (RTO)

IMSG received no significant strengths, no strengths, no weaknesses, no significant weaknesses, and 1 deficiency, resulting in an adjectival rating of Poor for this subfactor.

DEFICIENCY #1: GROSSLY INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO THE RTO

The offeror proposes a grossly inadequate response to the RTO. Many proposed tasks are superficial, paraphrased, or omitted. Tasks are included that were not required, and some of these are inappropriate to an R&D effort. Staffing/skill mix and proposed Government interaction are inadequate.

The offeror fails to propose to develop the algorithms for proxy data. The offeror states: "A number of algorithms are available for generating ARIES/HIVIS proxy data." But, the RTO task is to "Develop programs to generate ARIES/HIVIS proxy radiance data..." Thus the offeror fails to propose a strategy for improving the retrieval algorithm. Their discussion of how to modify AIRS/MODIS retrieval programs to use ARIES/HIVIS proxy data does not indicate what might be done to modify the current AIRS retrieval algorithm to take advantage of the higher spatial resolution of ARIES. Also, the offeror's discussion does not address the important issues in optimizing AIRS retrieval methodology for best use with ARIES, such as (1) incorporation of MODIS-like products, or (2) optimizing the number of ARIES FOVs used. Post-launch activities are briefly discussed and lacking in detail (other than to repeat the RTO requirements), making them impossible to evaluate. Also, tasks are proposed that are not required and some of them are inappropriate for the SAS contract. The offeror also proposes an inappropriate staffing/skill mix which is inappropriate to support the RTO.

Furthermore, the Offeror fails to identify two common risks: (1) late delivery of working code or analysis results at key points in the schedule, and (2) staff turnover at critical points in the 5-year plan. Their failure to list and mitigate the risks to deliverables and staffing which would disrupt a large mission-support task appreciably increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.

Subfactor C: Management Plan/Capabilities

IMSG received no significant strengths, 1 strength, 1 weakness, 2 significant weaknesses, and 2 deficiencies resulting in an adjectival rating of Poor for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: REALISTIC RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The offeror proposes a realistic risk management plan with several appropriate SAS-like risks identified with reasonable mitigation strategies. Likewise, the offeror proposes a comprehensive quality management plan for identifying and dealing with issues.

WEAKNESS #1: OCI PLAN FAILS TO ESTABLISH ADEQUATE MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The offeror's proposed OCI Avoidance Plan fails to establish adequate mitigation strategies for some situations. In dealing with impaired objectivity, the offeror proposes to "*Construct a firewall to mitigate potential OCI, if necessary.*" A firewall is not sufficient to deal with issues of impaired objectivity; a vendor must recues themselves from the situation.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #1: FAILURE TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SURVEILLANCE METHODS AND PERFORMANCE METRICS.

The offeror's Surveillance Plan fails to identify appropriate surveillance methods and performance metrics. The internal Surveillance Plan is generic, lacking detail and clarity. The offeror appears to have only a vague understanding of quantitative contract surveillance. The Plan fails to propose specific quantitative performance metrics (e.g. for timeliness, quality and/or quantity in different performance areas). For task-level performance, the proposal simply declares that it will establish metrics in their task order responses and will review the proposed metrics with the ATRs,

The offeror proposes generic surveillance actions that are not appropriate to the SAS RFP. They propose to provide task self-evaluation reports that will "*address all criteria stated in GSFC's Performance Evaluation Plan*" But, the SAS RFP does not include a Performance Evaluation Plan. They further propose to "*conduct a semiannual customer survey to ... assist GSFC to conduct performance assessment, which can be mapped easily to an award fee score*" But, the SAS contract is a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract, not a cost-plus-award-fee contract. They also supply a list of generic surveillance methods, but fail to identify specifically which method will be used for each SAS performance area. Instead, the offeror plans to choose surveillance methods at task initiation, task-by-task, then simply to aggregate task-level data to carry out its contract-level surveillance. Since contract-level (programmatic) surveillance has little in common with task-level (technical) surveillance, the offeror fails to demonstrate a firm understanding of surveillance methods.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #2: SUBCONTRACING MANAGEMENT PLANS HAS SIGNIFICANT FLAWS.

The proposed subcontracting management plan has significant flaws in three areas: 1) the basis of selection of their subcontractors, 2) the apportionment of effort, and 3) formal processes to resolve issues.

The offeror's subcontracting management plan has significant flaws. Using the levels of effort presented in the proposal, subcontracting can represent nearly half of the overall contract. However, the offeror fails to justify the selection of their two significant subcontractors, which

are together proposed for nearly half of the contract effort. Such a large, unjustified level of effort by subcontractors is an appreciable risk of unsuccessful contract performance.

Also, their subcontractor management plan lacks clarity and detail in the discussion of: a) how work is to be assigned to subcontractors, and b) the estimated level of effort. The offeror does not address the percentage of effort among the prime contractor and their two significant subcontractors. The only mention is in Exhibit C.11 which designates company lead responsibility in each of the six functional areas, with no explanation or estimation of the percentage split for the subcontractors. Thus, the proposal lacks adequate discussion to indicate a formal process to resolve issues with poor subcontractor performance.

DEFICIENCY #1: PHASE-IN PLAN LACKS DETAIL AND DEMONSTRATES MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE PUBLISHED TIMELINE.

The offeror's Phase-In Plan lacks detail and demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of the published timeline at the beginning of the contract. The proposed Phase-In Plan fails to meet the material requirement of the Government.

The offeror fails to understand the unique nature of the phase-in period of the SAS Contract. The five year term of the contract includes the phase-in period, with no additional contract for the phase-in, while discussions in the offeror's Phase-In Plan indicate a period in advance of the Contract Award. Ignoring this Government requirement, the offeror proposes to negotiate terms of the contract at an unspecified time after Contract Award, but, the Phase-in Plan is already part of the signed Contract and no further guidance from the Government is to be forthcoming. The offeror's lack of understanding of the NASA SAS contract process threatens to disrupt the contract transition and poses a serious risk to successful phase-In.

The phase-in plan presented by the offeror does not instill confidence that the offeror can provide a smooth Phase-in with no disruption to the work. The proposed hiring plan indicates that all hiring will be accomplished by the end of week 5 with a total of 60 SAS employees. The SAS contract is expected to have more than 100 employees at start-up. The proposed 60 employees after phase-in are inadequate to perform the Government's existing tasks (requiring more than 100 employees) without significant disruption.

DEFICIENCY #2: OBSOLETE INFORMATION TO PREPARE SAFETY AND HEALTH (S&H) PLAN

The offeror utilized obsolete reference information to prepare its Safety and Health Plan. The S&H Plan shows significant flaws and does not demonstrate over-all competence. Should the offeror be awarded this contract, a new S&H Plan must be prepared following appropriate guidelines.

The Safety and Health Plan that the offeror submitted in support of the activities related to SAS is inadequate. The offeror did not identify specific goals and objectives within the framework of the elements of the Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)'s VPP Safety and Health Management System (Management Leadership & Employee Involvement, Worksite Analysis, Hazard Prevention & Control, and Safety & Health Training). Although NASA does not expect its contractor to be VPP certified, the safety and Health goals and objectives should be aimed at complying with VPP parameters. Failure to address NASA safety programs expectations may result in work delays and unsuccessful contract performance. Also, the S&H Plan does not sufficiently describe management procedures for implementing its commitment to safety and health through visible management activities.

Furthermore, the method the offeror plans to use for internal program reviews & evaluations does not match NASA expected safety program reviews consisting of either (1) participation in OSHA VPP surveys at the request of the Government or (2) described in a written report that documents the methods & procedures for determining the existence and criticality of the hazardous operations. Also, the offeror does not describe the method and techniques that will be use for ranking the hazards and they did not offer details describing the procedures and techniques to be used to compile an inventory of hazards associated with the work to be performed on this contract.

STC

Subfactor A: Understanding the Requirements and technical approach

STC received 1 significant strength, 1 strength, 1 weakness, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH #1: THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF REQUIREMENTS FOR MODELING ACTIVITIES.

The offeror demonstrates a thorough understanding of SAS requirements for modeling activities, support services and high-end computing for Earth System Modeling and Analysis, a key functional area of the SOW.

The offeror demonstrates a comprehensive scientific understanding of SAS modeling activities. The offeror categorizes SAS models into three main types – Chemical Climate Models, Cloud Models and Radiative Transfer Models – and summarizes their development history and research use. They also demonstrate a solid understanding of some principal research directions in SAS modeling, such as combining stratospheric and tropospheric chemistry models and reducing uncertainties in aerosol radiative forcing. The offeror recognizes that much of the SAS modeling effort is highly collaborative with GMAO. Furthermore, the offeror proposes to develop a model Output Information System (OIS) to make diverse model output more readily available for browsing and analysis. They recognize that re-purposing a SAS model OIS for EPO support

would be a cost-effective way of exploiting synergies among disparate SAS tasks, and they understands the appropriate mix of skills and expertise required for SAS modeling support. Furthermore, the offeror recognizes the importance of high-end computing services for SAS modeling, and demonstrates proficiency in providing these services.

STRENGTH #1: GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF GROUND BASED AND SUB-ORBITAL INSTRUMENTATION

The offeror's proposal shows a good understanding of ground-based and sub-orbital instrumentation requiring support under the SAS contract. The offeror recognizes that design of new instruments depends heavily on the resource availability and design requirements of specific aircraft,

WEAKNESS #1: FAILS TO PRESENT ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR SUPPORT ROLE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The offeror fails to present an adequate understanding of their support role for research and development in atmospheric science at GSFC, offering mainly to support the mechanics of data processing and software development. The offeror fails to recognize that algorithm development for SAS data processing and analysis is a research-intensive effort that requires high-level scientific support

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #1: FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND NATURE OF SERVICES REQUIRED FOR DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS.

The offeror fails to understand the nature of the services required to support SAS Data Processing and Analysis, and is not prepared to provide the necessary personnel in this key functional area of the SOW.

The skill mix the offeror proposes to support SAS Data Processing and Analysis is inappropriate. The offeror proposes Support Scientists for only 2 of the 22 SAS SOW requirements in this key functional area, with Programmer Analysts and Programmers providing all the remaining support. This strongly suggests that the offeror is not prepared to provide the necessary personnel. They also did not discuss software standards and QA plans in its proposal. The offeror's failure to discuss its capabilities suggests that it is not prepared to provide the personnel necessary to recommend and apply appropriate software standards and QA plans.

Additionally, the offeror interprets the SAS data processing requirement to be wholly one of transitioning research code into operational code, and they specifically proposes "operationalizing" NPP data processing, where they mistakenly assign responsibility for the National Oceanographic Association Administration (NOAA)'s operational algorithm development to GSFC. GSFC has no agency responsibility for NPP data processing algorithms, and the SAS SOW has no requirement for transitioning research code into operational code.

Subfactor B: Representative Task Order (RTO)

STC received no significant strengths, 1 strength, no weaknesses, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: WELL ORGANIZED TASK PLAN FOR RTO

The offeror presents a well-organized task plan that reflects a clear understanding of the procedural requirements and overall scientific objectives of the RTO. The offeror understands well the overall scientific objectives of the RTO and presents a clear, top-down discussion of the background of the RTO, which calls for the development of improved AIRS-like and MODIS-like data products from the hypothetical enhanced-resolution ARIES/HIVIS instruments.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKENESS #1: POOR TECHNICAL UNDERSTANDING AND LACK OF EXPERTISE IN SUPPORTING R&D TASKS

The offeror's approach to the RTO subtasks reveals poor technical understanding and a lack of expertise in supporting R&D tasks.

The offeror's technical approach to RTO Pre-launch, the lynchpin of the RTO, is seriously flawed and represents poor understanding of crucial technical details. They also present an inadequate discussion of RTO Pre-launch Task, namely to optimize AIRS retrievals. The discussion fails to establish: (i) a quantitative metric to be optimized; and (ii) the thresholds needed for successful completion of the task. Furthermore, the offeror does not discuss the role of Government scientists in determining success criteria for this task.

The offeror inadequately understands crucial aspects of RTO Pre-launch Task, the ARIES instrument resolution trade study. The offeror's discussion addresses the fraction of scenes that will be clear as a function of ARIES FOV. The important question to address is how much the retrieval algorithm, which does not require clear scenes, would benefit from using smaller FOVs. They show little understanding of how to modify ARIES retrievals based upon on-orbit data for RTO Post- and they shows little understanding of the data assimilation experiments to be conducted for RTO Post-launch.

Subfactor C: Management Plan/Capabilities

STC received no significant strengths, 1 strength, 1 weakness, 1 significant weakness, and no deficiencies resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

STRENGTH #1: VERY DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PHASE-IN

The offeror proposes a very detailed and comprehensive management plan for the SAS Phase-In, which enhances the potential for an orderly transition into the new contract. They provide a

comprehensive Work Breakdown Structure covering eight categories, which are broken down further into 36 tasks, which clearly outlines each WBS task responsibilities.

WEAKNESS #1: MANAGEMENT OVERLOAD FOR R&D SERVICES

The offeror proposes a considerable amount of management for a R&D service contract. The offeror's proposal assigns several management functions to the technical Task Leads. These functions, roles and responsibilities for the Task Leads, detract from the technical work by the Task Leads.

SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS #1: INCONSISTENT FUNCTIONAL SPLIT OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN PRIME AND SUBCONTRACTORS

The offeror's discussion of the functional split of responsibilities between prime and subcontractors is inconsistent. The proposed division-of-labor is not appropriate to the extent-of-work.

The offeror fails to provide a clear delineation of the functional split of responsibilities among the prime and two subcontractors but the accompanying discussion of the functional division-of-labor is neither specific nor consistent with the percentages outlined in the offeror's proposal. According to the discussion in the offeror's proposal, the two subcontractors are collectively listed as primary in all three of the key functional areas of the SAS SOW, as well as secondary in two of the three key areas. The estimated extent-of-work does not appear to be supported by the division-of-labor as stated in their proposal. These inconsistencies in the offeror's proposed subcontracting plan appreciably increase the risk of unsatisfactory contract performance.

PAST PERFORMANCE FACTOR

Both SSAI and ADNET received Very High confidence ratings, STC and IMSG received High confidence ratings and Caelum received a Neutral confidence rating for Past Performance.

The SEB evaluated Past Performance in accordance with provision M.5 of the RFP. The Past Performance Confidence rating was based on the Offeror-provided past performance information, Offeror's customer-provided past performance questionnaires, information from Government past performance database, and interviews with customers and government personnel. The Past Performance of the prime contractor was weighted more heavily than any significant subcontractor or combination of significant subcontractors in the overall past performance evaluation.

SSAI

SSAI has past performance experience on four contracts all of which are very highly relevant to the SAS acquisition. SSAI demonstrated very high performance on previous contracts. The prime offeror, SSAI, received a very high performance rating on two contracts and a high

performance rating on two contracts. The proposed significant subcontractor received a very high performance rating on one contract. Based on SSAI's record of past performance, the Government has a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

ADNET

ADNET has past performance experience on four contracts all of which were very highly relevant to the SAS acquisition. ADNET demonstrated very high performance on previous contracts. ADNET received a very high performance rating on one contract and a high performance rating on one contract. The proposed significant subcontractor AER received a high performance rating on one contract. The proposed subcontractor Fibertek received a very high performance rating on one contract. Based on ADNET's record of past performance, the Government has a Very High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

CAELUM

Caelum has past performance experience on two contracts that are neutrally relevant to the SAS acquisition. Caelum cited two contracts of very low relevance. The proposed subcontractor, ATK, has contracts that were individually very highly relevant to instrument support. The proposed subcontractor ATK received a very high performance rating on one of its contract, and a high performance rating on one of its contract. Due to the lack of recent, relevant, past performance Caelum's past performance rating is neutral. Based on Caelum's lack of a recent, relevant record of past performance in two key functional areas, the Government has a Neutral Level of Confidence in the Offeror's ability to perform the required effort.

IMSG

IMSG has past performance experience on three contracts that are highly relevant to the SAS acquisition. While these three contracts were individually very highly relevant, the proposed subcontractor for the key functional area of instrumentation, INNOVIM, did not demonstrate relevant past performance in this area. IMSG demonstrated high performance on previous contracts. IMSG received a very high performance rating on one contract and a high performance rating on one contract. Proposed subcontractor USRA received a moderate performance rating on one contract. Proposed subcontractor INNOVIM was not rated. Based on IMSG's record of past performance, the Government has a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

STC

STC has past performance experience on six contracts that are highly relevant to the SAS acquisition. STC's cost/size relevance on its three contracts was very low. Team STC

demonstrated very high performance on previous contracts. STC received very high performance ratings on three contracts. The proposed significant subcontractor Sigma Space received a high performance rating on one contract, and a very high performance rating on one contract. Subcontractor GATS received a very high performance rating on one contract. Based on STC's record of past performance, the Government has a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

COST FACTOR

The ranges of proposed and probable costs for all offerors were relatively close, within approximately 10 percent from the lowest to highest offeror. The proposed costs (including phase-in) for all offerors were in the following order, from lowest to highest: SSAI, Caelum, IMMSG, STC and ADNET. The probable costs (including phase-in) for all offerors were in the following order, from lowest to highest: STC, ADNET, SSAI, Caelum and IMMSG.

ADNET Systems Inc had the second lowest probable cost with very minor probable cost adjustment.

Caelum had the second highest probable cost with moderate cost adjustments (approximately 10%).

IMMSG had the highest probable cost with moderate cost adjustments (approximately 10%).

SSAI had the third lowest probable cost with moderate cost adjustments (approximately 10%).

STC had the lowest probable cost with very minor cost adjustments.

Source Selection Decision

I carefully reviewed the Source Evaluation Board's (SEB's) documentation entitled "Presentation to the Source Selection Authority Support for Atmospheric Sciences (SAS)", dated 28 February 2012 and 14 March 2012. I determined that the findings presented by the SEB, as documented in its presentation and the accompanying "SAS Cost Evaluation Report" were detailed, consistent with the evaluation criteria in the SAS RFP, and provided a clear description of the merits of each proposal. I questioned the SEB with regard to its rationale for the findings and the adjectival ratings and scores for the mission suitability subfactors, and also questioned the rationale for and evaluation of past performance and cost. Further, I solicited the views of my ex-officio advisors in their areas of expertise. I determined that the findings and evaluations were reasonable and valid for purposes of making a selection decision. I accept the findings from the SEB and concur with the Contracting Officer that a competitive range and discussions are not necessary. In determining which proposal offered the best value to NASA, I referred to the relative order of importance of the three evaluation factors as specified in the RFP:

The Cost Factor is significantly less important than the combined importance of the Mission Suitability Factor and the Past Performance Factor. As individual Factors, Mission Suitability Factor is the most important, and the Past Performance Factor is more important than the Cost Factor.

Finally, I carefully considered the findings in relation to the evaluation criteria in the RFP, and I exercised my independent judgment regarding the significance of the findings as discriminators between the proposals in accordance with the evaluation criteria in the RFP.

Comparing the proposals under subfactor A, Understanding the Requirements and Technical Approach, which is the second most important subfactor under Mission Suitability, I noted a selection discriminator in that SSAI was the only offeror to receive an "excellent" rating, while the other offerors received "fair" or "poor" ratings. SSAI's "excellent" rating for subfactor A was based upon two significant strengths and two strengths, with no weaknesses. Specifically, the SSAI proposal distinguished itself by presenting strong understanding and technical expertise in all three key functional areas required by the SAS RFP-- instrumentation, modeling, and data analysis resulting in two significant strengths and strength in these three areas. The second highest rated offeror, STC, received a "fair" rating based upon one significant strength, one strength, one weakness, and one significant weakness. ADNET received a "fair" rating based upon two strengths, one weakness, and one significant weakness. Caelum received a "fair" rating based upon one strength, one weakness, and one significant weakness. IMSG received a "poor" rating based upon one significant strength, one strength, one significant weakness, and one deficiency. I determined that the STC, ADNET, Caelum and IMSG proposals each contained a significant weakness or deficiency in some key functional area. The significant weaknesses and deficiency made these offerors less competitive for selection.

Comparing the proposals under subfactor B, Representative Task Order, the least important subfactor under Mission Suitability, I noted a selection discriminator in that SSAI was the only offeror to receive an "excellent" rating, while the other offerors received "fair" or "poor" ratings. SSAI's "excellent" rating for subfactor B was based upon one significant strength, with no weaknesses. Specifically, the SSAI proposal distinguished itself by presenting both the management skills and the technical expertise that would be required to carry out a detailed, well-organized task plan for a scientifically and technically challenging algorithm development effort to support a hypothetical space-borne instrument suite. The second highest rated offeror, STC, received a "fair" rating based upon one strength, and one significant weakness. Caelum received a "fair" rating based upon one strength, and one significant weakness. ADNET received a "poor" rating based upon one deficiency. IMSG received a "poor" rating based upon one deficiency. I determined that the STC, ADNET, Caelum and IMSG proposals each contained a significant weakness or deficiency in some management or technical response to the RTO, making them less competitive for selection.

Comparing the proposals under subfactor C, Management Plan/Capabilities, which is the most important subfactor under Mission Suitability, I noted a selection discriminator in that SSAI was the only offeror to receive a "very good" rating, while the other offerors received "fair" or "poor" ratings. SSAI's "very good" rating for subfactor C was based upon one significant strength, two strengths, and one weakness. Specifically, the SSAI proposal distinguished itself by presenting a highly effective capability to identify, hire, motivate and retain top-notch scientific and technical staff. The second highest rated offeror, ADNET, received a "fair" rating based upon two strengths, one weakness, and one significant weakness. STC received a "fair" rating based upon one strength, one weakness, and one significant weakness. Caelum received a "fair" rating based upon one strength, one weakness, and one significant weakness. IMSG received a "poor" rating based upon one strength, one weakness, two significant weaknesses, and two deficiencies. I determined that the STC, ADNET, Caelum and IMSG proposals each contained a significant weakness or deficiency in some management capability, making them less competitive for selection.

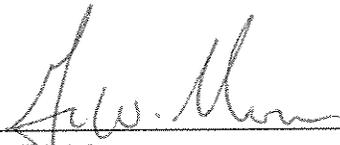
Based upon the above evaluations of all three subfactors, I concluded that SSAI's proposal had a clear competitive advantage in Mission Suitability.

The SEB's evaluation of Past Performance Factor resulted in a "Very High" level of confidence ratings for SSAI and ADNET. The SEB rated Caelum's level of confidence as "Neutral", due to the lack of relevant past performance in two of the three key functional areas required by the SAS RFP. The SEB rated Team IMSG with a "High" level of confidence for the SAS contract, limited by a lack of evidence for relevant instrument support on previous contracts. The SEB rated team STC with a "High" level of confidence for very high overall performance on recent contracts, limited by low cost/size relevance of those contracts to the SAS contract. I concurred with the SEB's ratings of past Performance for all offerors.

I examined the SEB's analysis of the Cost Factor, the least important evaluation factor for the SAS contract, questioning the proposed costs and the probable cost adjustment that was made to conform to the Government Pricing Model (GPM) and the SEB's suggestions for realistic management staff levels. I accept the SEB's analysis of each offeror's Proposed Costs, Probable Costs, and Phase-In Cost. I find that SSAI has the lowest proposed cost. Additionally, SSAI's probable cost is only slightly higher than the lower probable costs from STC and ADNET (less than one percent).

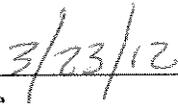
Based on the foregoing evaluations, and upon consideration of the relative importance of the three evaluation factors under the SAS RFP, I determined that one offeror, SSAI, presented an overall superior proposal that offered the best value to the Government. SSAI's significantly higher Mission Suitability subfactor ratings and associated findings were a major discriminator in my selection. Notably, SSAI's proposal was rated highest in each of the three Mission Suitability subfactors, and it was the only proposal without significant weaknesses or deficiencies. Additionally, Past Performance Factor was not a discriminator in my selection

decision. Finally, I noted that SSAI's proposal offered the lowest proposed cost, with a competitive probable cost. The lower probable costs from STC and ADNET were only slightly lower than SSAI (less than one percent), which does not outweigh the significant benefits from SSAI in their Mission Suitability evaluation. Therefore, I select SSAI for award of the Support for Atmospheric Science (SAS) contract.



George W. Morrow

SAS Source Selection Authority



Date