

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

John H. Glenn Research Center
Lewis Field
Cleveland, OH 44135-3191



SOURCE SELECTION STATEMENT

ADVANCED RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT (ARTS)

NNC12ZRE026R

Procurement Description

This procurement will provide Advanced Research and Technology Support to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Glenn Research Center (GRC). The type of support includes specialized research and development capabilities. To accomplish this requirement, the government anticipates awarding a single indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract. The anticipated period of performance is 1 base year, three 1-year options, and one 6-month option. The solicitation also provided for a routine phase-in period of 45 days. Full performance is anticipated to commence on October 1, 2013.

A draft Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued on September 16, 2012, through the NASA Acquisition Internet Service (NAIS). The final RFP was posted via NAIS on February 21, 2013. No amendments were issued. Two proposals were received, and after initial review, were both considered responsive and included in the formal evaluation process. The proposals were submitted by:

Universities Space Research Association, Columbia, MD
QinetiQ North America Inc., McLean, VA

A competitive range was established on June 20, 2013, and both offerors were included in the range. The offerors were notified of their inclusion and were requested to participate in a telecom to clarify interim final proposal revision (iFPR) instructions and answer any questions the offerors had on the iFPR request. Both offerors submitted an iFPR and a subsequent final proposal revision.

Evaluation Procedures

The proposals were evaluated by a designated Source Evaluation Board (SEB) in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 15.3 – Source Selection, NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) 1815.3 – Source Selection, and the evaluation criteria was included in the RFP. The appointed SEB met to perform its formal evaluation. The SEB members evaluated each offeror

independently and then the voting SEB members met as a group to establish consensus scoring. Consensus scoring is reflected in the final findings.

The RFP evaluation criteria consisted of the following factors: mission suitability, relevant experience and past performance, and cost/price. The mission suitability and relevant experience and past performance each received an adjectival rating. The relevant experience and past performance was evaluated using the ratings as outlined in Section M. 4. Relevant Experience and Past Performance Factor – Volume II of the RFP. The cost/price factor did not receive a rating but was evaluated for realism and compared using the criteria outlined in Section M. 5. Cost Factor – Volume III of the RFP.

Of the evaluation factors identified above, Section 6. Relative Importance of the Above Three Factors of the RFP, stated that while the mission suitability factor is the most important, the cost/price factor and relevant experience and past performance factor are considered equally important. However, when combined, the mission suitability factor and the cost/price factor are more important than the relevant experience and past performance factor.

The mission suitability factor was evaluated as described above and a numerical rating was established for each offeror. The relative weights in terms of maximum numerical scores established for each subfactor were as follows:

Mission Suitability Subfactor	Maximum Score
Management Plan	375 points
Overall Understanding of the Technical Requirements	425 points
Key Personnel, Recruitment, and Staffing	200 points
Total Points Available	1000 points

Findings

The findings below are summarized by evaluation factor for each offeror.

Universities Space Research Association (USRA)

Mission Suitability Factor

In the mission suitability factor, the USRA received 861 points.

The overall rating for the USRA in the management plan subfactor was “Very Good.” The proposal contained one significant strength and one strength for this subfactor.

The USRA’s proposal had a significant strength for its detailed and thorough discussion of its organizational structure and management plan, which included an empowered core management team, streamlined task support and success via the communication pathway within the contract

organization, delegation of authority, and a detailed task management plan, among other variables. The USRA's proposal also had a strength for its phase-in plan, which included an established collaborative teaming arrangement with all five incumbent contractors.

The overall rating for the USRA in the understanding of the technical requirements subfactor was "Excellent." The proposal contained two significant strengths and three strengths for this subfactor.

The USRA's proposal had a significant strength for meeting the requirements statement of work (SOW) by providing a comprehensive and integrated task order process that demonstrated its expertise in managing a task-based research contract. The USRA's proposal also had another significant strength for demonstrating its understanding in responding to the representative technical tasks with exceptional, comprehensive, and well-organized work plans detailing how it would implement the plan to accomplish the technical tasks.

The USRA's proposal also had three strengths in this subfactor. The USRA's proposal contained a strength for providing a clear and thorough understanding of and its approach to meet the technical requirements for each of the seven technical areas listed in the SOW. The USRA's proposal had another strength for its comprehensive and detailed approach to risk management. The USRA's proposal provided a detailed risk management matrix that defined metrics for risk consequence and risk probability, which provided a clear and easy visual reference document for the team. The USRA's proposal received a final strength in this subfactor for its safety and health (S&H) Plan. The USRA's proposal included a S&H policy of proactive communication via monitoring, and reporting, and a plan to comply with all OSHA, State, Local, Federal, NASA, and GRC requirements.

The overall rating for the USRA in the key personnel, recruitment, and staffing (KP) subfactor was "Good."

The proposal contained a single strength for this subfactor. The USRA's proposal received a strength for its innovative and effective approach to identify, recruit, and staff positions with highly qualified personnel via utilization of the incumbent workforce, database of skills, a Web-based approach to reach out to academia and industry, among other variables.

Relevant Experience and Past Performance Factor

In the relevant experience and past performance factor, the USRA was rated with a "Very High" level of confidence by the SEB.

The USRA's proposal contained one significant strength and two strengths in relevant experience and past performance, thereby giving the SEB a very high level of confidence that it will be able to perform the work under the ARTS contract. There were no weaknesses identified. The USRA had multiple prior contracts considered highly relevant or relevant to the ARTS contract; was rated "Excellent" and "Very Good" (96 percent (USRA); and 91 percent and 97 percent for its major subcontractors) in client responses to the Past Performance Questionnaires; and was

rated “Exceptional” and “Very Good” by 86 percent of the clients in the Past Performance Information Retrieval System.

Cost/Price Factor

In the cost/price factor, a probable cost analysis was performed, and there were no probable cost adjustments made to the proposed contract costs.

Seven of the offeror’s business systems were reviewed for a determination of their current status of acceptability to the government. Of the reviewed systems, the USRA’s systems status disclosed: two systems were not approved, contractor estimating and contractor executive compensation; four systems were approved by the appropriate government authority, contractor accounting system, contractor purchasing system, contractor billing system, and cost accounting standards. The cost accounting standards coverage was determined to be at the “Full” level of disclosure. An approved cost accounting system is required for the award of a flexibly priced contract such as the ARTS contract.

QinetiQ North America Inc. (QinetiQ)

Mission Suitability Factor

In the mission suitability factor, the QinetiQ received 653 points.

The overall rating for the QinetiQ in the management plan subfactor was “Good.” The proposal contained two strengths for this subfactor.

The QinetiQ’s proposal had a strength for its proactive and detailed phase-in plan, which included metrics to measure progress, readiness reviews, and a clear process covering the phase-in. The QinetiQ’s proposal also had a strength for exceeding the government’s goals for small business utilization by providing an aggressive small business plan.

The overall rating for the QinetiQ in the understanding of the technical requirements subfactor was rated “Good.” The proposal contained four strengths for this subfactor.

The QinetiQ’s proposal had a strength for its approach in meeting the government’s requirements by providing a detailed discussion of how it would meet the requirements in the SOW’s technical areas and address challenges, thereby demonstrating its detailed understanding of the government’s requirements. The QinetiQ’s second strength in this subfactor was for its response to the representative technical tasks for including a thorough approach to identifying and obtaining highly qualified personnel for the technical tasks, thereby demonstrating its understanding of the staffing requirements necessary to perform the work on the ARTS contract. The QinetiQ’s proposal also received a strength for its risk management plan by including a comprehensive and detailed approach to risk management including a continuous risk management process. The QinetiQ’s final strength in this subfactor was for its proactive S&H plan that was all inclusive of the vendor’s employees and aligned with the NASA Safety and Health Division’s safety committee activities.

The overall rating for the QinetiQ in the KP subfactor was “Good.” The proposal contained a single strength for this subfactor.

The QinetiQ’s proposal received a strength for providing a detailed and thorough discussion of its total compensation package, which would allow the QinetiQ to attract and retain qualified employees to perform the work on the ARTS contract.

Relevant Experience and Past Performance Factor

In the relevant experience and past performance factor, the QinetiQ was rated with a “Moderate Level” of confidence. The QinetiQ’s proposal contained three strengths in relevant experience and past performance, thereby giving the SEB a moderate level of confidence that it will be able to perform the work under the ARTS contract. There were no weaknesses identified. The QinetiQ had multiple contracts considered either relevant or moderately relevant to the ARTS contract; was rated “Excellent” and “Very Good” (95 percent (QinetiQ); and 97 percent for its major subcontractor) in client responses to the past performance questionnaires; and was rated “Exceptional” and “Very Good” by 53 percent of the clients in the Past Performance Information Retrieval System.

Cost/Price Factor

In the cost/price factor, a probable cost analysis was performed, and there were no probable cost adjustments made to the QinetiQ proposed contract costs.

Seven of the offeror’s business systems were reviewed for a determination of their current status of acceptability to the government. Of the reviewed systems, the QinetiQ’s systems status disclosed: four systems were not approved, contractor estimating, contractor purchasing system, contractor billing system, and contractor executive compensation; one system was approved by the appropriate government authority, cost accounting standards. The cost accounting standards coverage was determined to be at the “Full” level of disclosure. For the contractor accounting system, the QinetiQ provided a determination of the accounting system’s acceptability for another flexibly priced government contract. The determination of acceptability could be applied to the ARTS contract based on a review by the contracting officer and their determination that the accounting system is acceptable for use on the ARTS contract. An approved cost accounting system is required for the award of a flexibly priced contract such as the ARTS contract.

Selection Decision

A source selection meeting was held on August 6, 2013. Present at the meeting were the SEB members plus key management individuals. At the meeting, the overall process, evaluations, and findings were presented and discussed.

Based on the information presented and after discussing the findings with the SEB and the management team present, I fully understand the evaluation process undertaken by the SEB and generally agree with the findings presented. I also understand that the RFP provided for a factor weighting that the mission suitability factor is the most important, while the cost/price factor and the relevant experience and past performance factor are considered equally important. I further understood that the RFP provided that when combined, the mission suitability factor and the cost/price factor are more important than the relevant experience and past performance factor.

In making my decision, I first note and agree with the SEB's indication that in the area of mission suitability, the USRA's proposal was clearly superior to the QinetiQ's. The USRA's proposal was not only qualitatively competitive but that quantitatively, 208 points separate the USRA's proposal from the QinetiQ's in mission suitability. According to the SEB, the USRA received a "Very Good," an "Excellent," and a "Good" in the three subfactors with multiple significant strengths and strengths. I was particularly impressed with the USRA's strong management approach, its comprehensive and integrated task order process, and its comprehensive work plans to complete the two representative task orders. I further note a number of strengths throughout all the subfactors including the USRA's teaming approach to getting work complete and its approach to effectively recruit and staff the ARTS contract. I consider its numerous strengths to indicate that the USRA is fully capable of performing the work under the ARTS contract with its strong management approach and organizational structure, a thorough understanding of the work required, and the fact that its teaming and recruiting plans will ensure the ARTS contract being successfully staffed.

I note that the QinetiQ was rated "good" in all subfactors. Although, the QinetiQ's proposal did not contain any significant strengths, it contained a number of strengths in each of the subfactors including a detailed phase-in plan, a small business plan exceeding the RFP goals, and its detailed approach to obtain highly qualified personnel. I consider the QinetiQ's numerous strengths to indicate a balanced proposal addressing the requirements of the RFP.

In a direct comparison of the two proposals in mission suitability, the USRA's proposal was rated "Very Good" and "Excellent" in two of three subfactors and contained significant strengths in how the USRA would manage the ARTS contract, its task order processing, and its work plans to complete the two representative task orders. I considered these three significant strengths related to how the USRA will manage the ARTS contract and how task order work will be completed to be meaningful discriminators between the two proposals. It demonstrates that the USRA has a thorough understanding of the contract requirements, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful contract performance to the government. I believe the USRA's comprehensive management response and task order discussion will help to insure effective program management and task order administration. While the QinetiQ provided a responsive proposal and received a number of strengths, I did not find any advantages or discriminators of the QinetiQ's proposal over the USRA's proposal. I therefore, consider the USRA to have provided a superior proposal in mission suitability.

In the area of relevant experience and past performance, I note that the USRA was rated with a "Very High" level of confidence and that it had one significant strength and two strengths. The significant strength was related to the highly relevant contracts of the USRA team. I note that

the USRA team is an incumbent on the current contract effort, which supports the finding of having highly relevant contracts. I further note the overall successful contract performance on these contracts. In discussions with the SEB, I understand that the "Very High" rating was based on the relevancy of the USRA's past contracts, which would include the fact that the USRA team is the current incumbent on some of the work effort. In my independent consideration of this rating, I somewhat disagree with the SEB. While I acknowledge and agree with the significant strength in the area of relevancy, I believe the single significant strength in relevancy and the two strengths in the area of performance is more supportive of a "High" level of confidence rating rather than a "Very High" rating for the USRA.

The QinetiQ was rated with a "Moderate Level" of confidence with three strengths. I note that the QinetiQ's contracts were not considered as relevant to the scope of the work under the ARTS contract. I, however, do acknowledge the QinetiQ's otherwise successful performance on these contracts. In further discussions with the SEB, I noted and agreed that the QinetiQ had multiple contracts considered either relevant or moderately relevant to the ARTS contract. However, lacking a significant strength and without highly relevant contracts, I agree with the SEB's overall rating of "Moderate Level" of confidence in relevant experience and past performance for the QinetiQ.

In a direct comparison, the USRA received the only significant strength in relevant experience and past performance due to its highly relevant contracts based on current contract incumbency. I acknowledge that both the USRA and the QinetiQ have strengths in contract performance. I consider past performance to be a strong indicator of successful contract performance going forward. I consider the USRA's successful past performance coupled with the fact that the USRA is the incumbent contractor on much of the current work effort, will likely lead to smooth contract transition and successful contract performance going forward. Although, I took note at the QinetiQ's successful performance on its contracts, the QinetiQ's relevant contract experience is not to the overall level of the USRA, and therefore, I do not consider the QinetiQ to have provided any advantages over the USRA in relevant experience and past performance. For its significant strength in contract relevancy, I therefore, consider the USRA proposal to have a slight advantage over the QinetiQ in relevant experience and past performance.

In the area of cost/price, I note the lower cost of the USRA. I further note that neither offeror had probable cost adjustments made to their proposals. I note that the lower cost of the USRA is primarily due to lower composite rates of certain highly skilled labor categories. I note that these composite rates are based on government estimating rates accepted by authorized government administrative contracting officers. I understand the actual cost experience by the government is subject to the actual task orders issued. I also note that, at this time, there is programmatic and budget uncertainty and future task order work is not fully defined. However, I still consider the lower proposed and probable costs proposed by the USRA to offer a slight advantage.

In summary, I find the USRA to be fully responsive to the RFP and capable of successfully performing the contract work effort as described in the RFP. I believe work continuity can be better achieved under the USRA due to its understanding of the contract's requirements and its sound management plan. I also find that the USRA offered advantages over the QinetiQ in all evaluation factors. While the QinetiQ's proposal did address the requirements of the RFP, I find

that the USRA provided a superior proposal in mission suitability, had highly relevant contract experience to the planned contract effort and a record of successful past performance, and also had lower overall costs.

In making my selection decision, I have given weight that mission suitability is the most important factor, while cost/price and relevant experience and past performance are considered equally important. I further took into account that when combined, mission suitability and cost/price were more important than relevant experience and past performance in weighting in accordance with the published evaluation scheme of the RFP. I find that the USRA clearly submitted a qualitatively and quantitatively technically superior proposal to the QinetiQ in mission support, which is the most important evaluation factor as stated in the RFP. Additionally, even though I disagreed with the SEB's level of confidence rating and found that the USRA should have received a "High" level of confidence for its relevant experience and past performance instead of a "Very High," I still agreed with the significant strength finding for the USRA under relevancy, particularly because of the type of work it has done and that relevancy to the work for this ARTS contract. Even with a "High" level of confidence, the USRA still had an advantage, albeit a slighter one; of performing the ARTS contract work successfully over the QinetiQ's "Moderate" level of confidence. In addition, the USRA's probable costs were lower to the government than the QinetiQ's.

Therefore, in accordance with the RFP requirements and acknowledging the relative importance of the evaluation criteria as stated earlier, especially taking into account that mission suitability was the most important factor, I find that the USRA provides the best solution to the ARTS RFP and I, therefore, select the Universities Space Research Association to perform the Advanced Research and Technology Support for the NASA GRC as outlined in the request for proposal NNC12ZRE026R.



 James M. Free
 Source Selection Official

20 Aug 13

 Date

Concurrence:



 Bradley J. Baker
 Procurement Officer

8/20/2013

 Date