

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Ames Research Center

Selection of Contractor
For
Intelligent Systems Research and Development Support-2 (ISRDS-2)
NNA13424845R

March 14, 2014

On March 7, 2014, I, along with certain NASA Source Evaluation Board (SEB) ex-officio members, met with the SEB members appointed to evaluate the proposals for the Intelligent Systems Research and Development Support-2 (ISRDS-2) procurement at NASA Ames Research Center (ARC). During this meeting, the SEB presented its Initial Evaluation findings to me, the Source Selection Authority (SSA), and we discussed those findings to assure that I had a full understanding of its evaluation.

I assessed the SEB's findings and its evaluation of the proposals. This Source Selection Statement reflects my independent judgment, which I based upon a comparative assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the proposals and the evaluation criteria prescribed in the Request for Proposal (RFP). My selection decision is set forth below.

Procurement Description

ARC has a continuing need for scientific research, technologies and applications development, and infusion of advanced information systems technology support services to assist the Intelligent Systems Division (Code TI) on NASA missions and other projects within the federal Government. This procurement will yield a contract that will provide support in the following research domains, including but not limited to: artificial intelligence (AI), knowledge-based systems, knowledge discovery and data mining, information processing and sensors, prognostic signal analysis, model-based diagnostic reasoning, system fault diagnostics, automated software methodologies, fault-tolerant computing hardware and networking, tele-presence and tele-control of remote, mobile platforms, autonomous and adaptive control, human-centered computing, collaborative system design, and distribution of research information in various formats and forums.

This procurement was conducted as a full and open competition and will result in a single award, Cost-Plus-Fixed-Fee (CPFF) hybrid contract consisting of Core requirements and Indefinite-Delivery/Indefinite-Quantity (IDIQ) Task Orders. The IDIQ minimum and maximum is \$500,000.00 and \$240,000,000.00, respectively. The period of performance consists of a three-year base period (including a 60-day phase-in period), and two one-year option periods, resulting in a maximum performance period of five years.

Evaluation Procedure

Proposals were evaluated in accordance with the requirements of Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 15.3, "Source Selection," as supplemented by NFS (NASA FAR Supplement) Subpart 1815.3, "Source Selection." Section M of the solicitation, paragraph M.2, Evaluation Approach, advised Offerors that the Government may award a contract based solely on the initial offers received and without discussion of such offers. Accordingly, each Offeror was required to submit its initial proposal to the Government using the most favorable terms from a technical and cost standpoint. However, the Government reserved the right to hold discussions if award on initial offers was determined not to be in the best interest of the Government.

The RFP identified three evaluation Factors: Mission Suitability (Volume I), Past Performance (Volume II), and Cost (Volume III). Of these evaluation Factors, Mission Suitability is moderately more important than Past Performance, and Past Performance is significantly more important than Cost. Evaluation factors other than Cost, when combined, are significantly more important than Cost.

The Mission Suitability Factor consists of three Sub-factors. The Sub-factors are shown below with their respective point allocation, which signifies their weight.

MISSION SUITABILITY	
Sub-factor	Assigned Weight
Management Approach Organizational Structure/Partnering Approach Key Personnel Staffing, Recruitment, Retention, and Training Phase-in Plan Case Study Total Compensation Plan Organizational Conflicts of Interest Avoidance Plan Safety and Health Plan	500
Technical Understanding	400
Small Business Utilization	100
Total Points Available	1,000

Each Offeror's Mission Suitability proposal was evaluated based on the Offeror's ability to efficiently fulfill the technical requirements while meeting quality, schedule, and safety requirements. The compatibility between the proposed management and technical approaches to accomplish the work was an important consideration in the evaluation of this Factor. The RFP stipulated that the overall Mission Suitability Factor would only receive a numerical score, and the Mission Suitability Sub-factors would be assigned adjectival ratings and numerical scores. In accordance with NFS 1815.305(a)(3), "Technical Evaluation," the following were the potential Mission Suitability adjectival ratings: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor. In Section M, paragraph M.2, Evaluation Approach, the RFP defined these adjectival ratings and provided applicable percentile ranges at each rating level.

With regard to the Past Performance Factor, the RFP stated that the evaluation would be an assessment of the Government's level of confidence in the Offeror's ability to perform the solicitation requirements. The past performance evaluation was based on the information provided by the Offeror in its Past Performance Volume II and on the assessment of customer questionnaires submitted on behalf of each Offeror and of its major subcontractors. The SEB evaluated the currency and relevancy of the information, source of the information, context of the data, and general trends in performance of the Offeror, major subcontractors, predecessor companies, key personnel with relevant experience, and any organization that would substantially contribute to the proposed contract, or would have the potential to significantly impact performance of the proposed contract. Further, for each Offeror and its major subcontractors, the SEB evaluated overall past performance with respect to comparability in contract size, content, and complexity to the requirements of the current acquisition. The SEB evaluated the depth of each Offeror's relevant past performance and gave evaluative credit to the quantity, as well as the quality, of each Offeror's past performance. This factor provided an opportunity to evaluate the quality of goods and services that each Offeror provided to the Government and other organizations as either a prime contractor or a subcontractor. The RFP required an evaluation of the Past Performance Factor using the following level of confidence ratings: Very High Level of Confidence, High Level of Confidence, Moderate Level of Confidence, Low Level of Confidence, Very Low Level of Confidence, and Neutral. In Section M, paragraph M.2, Evaluation Approach, the RFP defined these levels of confidence ratings. The SEB evaluated each Offeror's suitability to fulfill the requirements of this contract, as prescribed in Section M of the RFP.

For the Cost Factor, the SEB assessed what each Offeror's proposal would cost the Government should it be selected for award. The overall evaluated cost plus fixed fee for selection purposes was determined

by the sum of the cost plus fixed fee proposed for the Core Contract Management Requirement (CLINs 02A, 03A and 04A) and the Core Technical Elements (CLINs 02B, 03B and 04B). The cost of Phase-in was not included in the total evaluated cost, but it was evaluated in terms of reasonableness and realism. An analysis was performed to ensure the proposed resources were consistent with the proposed Phase-in Plan. In accordance with Subpart FAR 15.4, the SEB, with the assistance of the Price/Cost Analyst, conducted Cost proposal evaluations. The SEB analyzed the proposed costs to determine the cost and associated risks of doing business with each Offeror. In accordance with FAR 15.404-1(b), the SEB performed a cost realism analysis on the proposed cost, which resulted in an assessment of probable cost and certain probable cost adjustments.

Solicitation and Receipt of Proposals

In an effort to better inform industry of NASA's requirements and to improve communications between all parties, ARC held a pre-solicitation conference to allow interested parties to tour the Center and its facilities, to ask questions of the technical and procurement staff, and to meet one-on-one with the Contracting Officer (CO) and the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). ARC also issued a draft RFP that allowed for industry recommendations and comments on all aspects of the Government's proposed approach to satisfying the requirements. ARC also issued acquisition updates containing pertinent ISRDS-2 information. Industry was encouraged to ask questions about the ISRDS-2 requirements and the procurement process. The recommendations and comments received in response to these communications with industry were carefully evaluated and incorporated into the final RFP, as appropriate. A Government response to each recommendation or comment was prepared and was made available electronically to the public.

All documents pertinent to the acquisition were posted electronically on the NASA Acquisition Internet Service (NAIS) Business Opportunities web portal (http://prod.nais.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/nais/link_syp.cgi) as well as the Federal Business Opportunities web portal (<https://www.fbo.gov>). The draft RFP was released on February 13, 2013. The pre-proposal conference was held on February 26, 2013. The final RFP was released on June 3, 2013. Three (3) Amendments were posted to NAIS and FBO. Amendment 1 was posted on June 21, 2013, and it contained the following: questions and answers regarding the RFP, updated clauses in the RFP, a revised Statement of Work, a revised the Contract Data Requirements List, a revised Cost Template Workbook (J.1(b) Attachment 2), and a Microsoft Word version of the Past Performance Questionnaire (J.1(b) Attachment 6). Amendment 2 was posted on July 2, 2013, and it contained the following: questions and answers regarding the RFP, revised portions of Sections L and M in the RFP, and a revised Cost Template Workbook (J.1(b), Attachment 2). Amendment 3 was posted on July 9, 2013, and it contained questions and answers regarding the RFP.

Six proposals were received in response to the RFP by the specified closing time and date. The Offerors' names and addresses (listed alphabetically) are as follows:

Earth Resources Technology, Inc. (ERT)
14401 Sweitzer Lane, Suite 300
Laurel, MD 20707

Orbital Sciences Corporation (Orbital)
7500 Greenway Center Drive, Suite 700
Greenbelt, MD 20770

QinetiQ North America (QinetiQ)
11091 Sunset Hills Road
Reston, VA 20190

Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)
1710 SAIC Drive
McLean, VA 22102

Stinger Ghaffarian Technologies, Inc. (SGT)
7701 Greenbelt Road, Suite 400
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Universities Space Research Association (USRA)
10211 Wincopin Circle, Suite 500
Columbia, MD 21044

Proposals, including a cover letter, were received from each Offeror. Each proposal consisted of three separate volumes, corresponding to the three respective evaluation Factors, in accordance with Section L of the solicitation and FAR Parts 15.101 and 15.306. A copy of each proposal for the six Offerors was issued to each of the seven voting members, the Recorder and the Price/Cost Analyst (non-voting members) of the SEB.

Evaluation Process

After receipt of proposals, the SEB members individually reviewed each proposal and met to discuss individual findings. Following review of each of the Mission Suitability proposals, the SEB identified strengths and weaknesses for each proposal. In the Mission Suitability Factor, the identified strengths and weaknesses were categorized as a "Significant Strength" or "Significant Weakness" or, if not significant, as a "Strength" or a "Weakness." Following NFS 1815.305, strength and weakness findings were used to establish adjectival ratings and numerical scores for each Mission Suitability Sub-factor. Then, a numerical score was assigned for the overall Mission Suitability Factor.

The SEB members evaluated the Past Performance Factor and identified findings based on each Offeror's proposal and the questionnaires completed by past and current customers. In Past Performance, the identified findings were not categorized as strengths or weaknesses. NFS 1815.305(a)(2) gives discretion to the individual NASA Centers on whether to assign strengths or weaknesses. For purposes of this procurement, NASA ARC decided not to assign strengths or weaknesses in the Past Performance Factor. The SEB's evaluation documented each Offeror's relevant past performance and the currency of the past performance to assess and assign the Offeror's overall level of confidence rating.

The SEB and the Price/Cost Analyst reviewed all of the Cost proposals. In accordance with FAR 15.305(a)(1) and NFS 1815.305(a)(1)(B), the SEB, with the assistance of the Price/Cost Analyst, evaluated cost realism and price reasonableness for each proposal which resulted in an assessment of probable cost and certain probable cost adjustments when required. Neither a numerical score nor an adjectival rating was assigned for the Cost Factor.

I reviewed the SEB's findings, adjectival ratings and numerical scores for Mission Suitability. I reviewed the findings and level of confidence ratings for Past Performance. I reviewed the Cost evaluation results, including the proposed costs, the cost realism and price reasonableness analyses, and the probable cost adjustments. I fully considered all of this information prior to making my final selection decision.

Evaluation Findings of the SEB

Mission Suitability Factor

The following addresses the Mission Suitability findings for the six Offerors. The SEB did not identify any "Deficiency" findings in any of the Mission Suitability proposals.

ERT

The ERT Mission Suitability proposal received 550 points (out of a possible 1000 points)—the third highest score among all Offerors.

In the Management Approach Sub-factor, ERT received an adjectival rating of Fair with a numerical score of 250 points (out of a possible 500 points). Three (3) Strengths, one (1) Weakness, and one (1) Significant Weakness were identified. The Strengths were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's proposed approach to effectively and efficiently vest full authority and autonomy with local key personnel; (2) its reasonable and effective staffing strategy; and (3) its agile, iterative test-driven management approach to the Case Study. The Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's overestimation of the scope of the required work and its unreasonable assumptions proposed in response to the Case Study. The Significant Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's organizational structure and partnering approach, which fails to provide clear internal and external lines of authority.

In the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, ERT received an adjectival rating of Good with a numerical score of 240 points (out of a possible 400 points). There were no strengths or weaknesses identified in this Sub-factor.

In the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor, ERT received an adjectival rating of Good with a numerical score of 60 points (out of a possible 100 points). There were no strengths or weaknesses identified in this Sub-factor.

Orbital

The Orbital Mission Suitability proposal received 332 points (out of a possible 1000 points)—the lowest score among all Offerors.

In the Management Approach Sub-factor, Orbital received an adjectival rating of Poor with a numerical score of 100 points (out of a possible 500 points). Two (2) Weaknesses and two (2) Significant Weaknesses were identified. The Weaknesses were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's ineffective and inefficient approach to Key Personnel and (2) its unreasonable and ineffective management approach to the Case Study project. The Significant Weaknesses were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's unreasonable, ineffective, and inefficient organizational structure and partnering approach and (2) its unreasonable and ineffective Phase-in approach.

In the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, Orbital received an adjectival rating of Fair with a numerical score of 140 points (out of a possible 400 points). One (1) Significant Weakness was identified. The Significant Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's unreasonable and ineffective approach, which fails to demonstrate its technical understanding of the requirements to accomplish the work.

In the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor, Orbital received an adjectival rating of Excellent with a numerical score of 92 points (out of a possible 100 points). One (1) Significant Strength was identified. The Significant Strength was assigned for the Offeror's proposed sub-category small business subcontracting goals that greatly exceed the solicitation requirements and for the demonstration of its strong commitment to developing and assisting small businesses.

QinetiQ

The QinetiQ Mission Suitability proposal received 357 points (out of a possible 1000 points)—the second lowest score among all Offerors.

In the Management Approach Sub-factor, QinetiQ received an adjectival rating of Poor with a numerical score of 125 points (out of a possible 500 points). Two (2) Strengths, three (3) Weaknesses, and one (1) Significant Weakness were identified. The Strengths were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's reasonable and effective mentoring program as part of its recruitment and retention plan and (2) its effective and efficient management approach to the Case Study. The Weaknesses were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's unreasonable and ineffective organizational structure and partnering approach; (2) its ineffective Staffing, Recruitment, Retention, and Training approach; and (3) its unreasonable and ineffective Phase-In Plan. The Significant Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's unreasonable, ineffective, and inefficient approach to Key Personnel.

In the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, QinetiQ received an adjectival rating of Fair with a numerical score of 140 points (out of a possible 400 points). One (1) Significant Weakness was identified. The Significant Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's unsound, ineffective, and inefficient approach, which demonstrates a lack of technical understanding of the Statement of Work (SOW) requirements.

In the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor, QinetiQ received an adjectival rating of Excellent with a numerical score of 92 points (out of a possible 100 points). One (1) Significant Strength was identified. The Significant Strength was assigned for the Offeror's proposed small business subcontracting goals that exceed the total small business goal and greatly exceed many of the sub-category goals identified in the solicitation and for the demonstration of its strong commitment to developing and assisting small businesses.

SAIC

The SAIC Mission Suitability proposal received 382 points (out of a possible 1000 points)—the third lowest score among all Offerors.

In the Management Approach Sub-factor, SAIC received an adjectival rating of Poor with a numerical score of 150 points (out of a possible 500 points). One (1) Strength, two (2) Weaknesses, and one (1) Significant Weakness were identified. The Strength was assigned for the Offeror's management approach to the Case Study which demonstrates its ability to successfully capture pertinent milestones and critical task elements, promotes collaboration, and demonstrates an understanding of the management challenges. The Weaknesses were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's unreasonable and ineffective approach to Key Personnel; and (2) a flaw in its approach to the Case Study. The Significant Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's unreasonable, ineffective, and inefficient organizational structure and partnering approach.

In the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, SAIC received an adjectival rating of Fair with a numerical score of 140 points (out of a possible 400 points). One (1) Significant Weakness was identified. The Significant Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's unsound, ineffective, and inefficient approach, which demonstrates a lack of technical understanding of the SOW requirements.

In the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor, SAIC received an adjectival rating of Excellent with a numerical score of 92 points (out of a possible 100 points). One (1) Significant Strength was identified. The Significant Strength was assigned for the Offeror's proposed small business subcontracting goals that exceed the total small business goal and the sub-category small business goals identified in the solicitation and for the demonstration of its strong commitment to developing and assisting small businesses.

SGT

The SGT Mission Suitability proposal received 824 points (out of a possible 1000 points)—the highest score among all Offerors.

In the Management Approach Sub-factor, SGT received an adjectival rating of Very Good with a numerical score of 450 points (out of a possible 500 points). One (1) Significant Strength and two (2) Strengths were identified. The Significant Strength was assigned for the Offeror's proposed reasonable, effective, and efficient organizational structure and partnering approach. The Strengths were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's reasonable and effective Staffing, Recruitment, and Training approach; and (2) its proposed comprehensive, effective, and efficient management approach to the Case Study.

In the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, SGT received an adjectival rating of Good with a numerical score of 280 points (out of a possible 400 points). One (1) Strength was identified. The Strength was assigned for the Offeror's effective and efficient approach, which demonstrates a sound technical understanding of the general scope of the SOW.

In the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor, SGT received an adjectival rating of Excellent with a numerical score of 94 points (out of a possible 100 points). One (1) Significant Strength was identified. The Significant Strength was assigned for the Offeror's proposed small business subcontracting goals that greatly exceed the total small business goal and greatly exceed the sub-category goals identified in the solicitation as well as the demonstration of its strong commitment to developing and assisting small businesses.

USRA

The USRA Mission Suitability proposal received 670 points (out of a possible 1000 points)—the second highest score among all Offerors.

In the Management Approach Sub-factor, USRA received an adjectival rating of Good with a numerical score of 350 points (out of a possible 500 points). Two (2) Strengths and one (1) Weakness were identified. The Strengths were assigned for: (1) the Offeror's proposed reasonable and effective organizational structure and approach; and (2) its proposed reasonable and effective Phase-In Plan. The Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's proposed ineffective and inefficient management approach to the Case Study.

In the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, USRA received an adjectival rating of Good with a numerical score of 260 points (out of a possible 400 points). One (1) Strength and one (1) Weakness were identified. The Strength was assigned for the Offeror's effective and efficient approach, which demonstrates a sound technical understanding of the four core research technology areas. The Weakness was assigned for the Offeror's failure to fully demonstrate its understanding of certain IDIQ requirements identified in the SOW.

In the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor, USRA received an adjectival rating of Good with a numerical score of 60 points (out of a possible 100 points). There were no strengths or weaknesses identified in this Sub-factor.

Past Performance Factor

The following addresses the Past Performance findings for the six Offerors. In accordance with NFS 1815.305(a)(2)(A), strengths or weaknesses were not assigned.

ERT

The evaluation of ERT's Past Performance resulted in a High Level of Confidence. The Offeror demonstrated very effective past performance in technical performance, contract management, and corporate responsiveness on recent and relevant contracts. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

Orbital

The evaluation of Orbital's Past Performance resulted in a High Level of Confidence. The Offeror demonstrated very effective past performance in technical performance, contract management, and corporate responsiveness on recent and relevant contracts. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

QinetiQ

The evaluation of QinetiQ's Past Performance resulted in a High Level of Confidence. The Offeror demonstrated very effective past performance in technical performance, contract management, and corporate responsiveness on recent and relevant contracts. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

SAIC

The evaluation of SAIC's Past Performance resulted in a High Level of Confidence. The Offeror demonstrated very effective past performance in technical performance, contract management, and corporate responsiveness on recent and relevant contracts. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

SGT

The evaluation of SGT's Past Performance resulted in a Very High Level of Confidence. The Offeror demonstrated highly relevant past performance of exceptional merit in technical performance, contract management, and corporate responsiveness on recent and relevant contracts comparable to the ISRDS-2 requirements. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a Very High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

USRA

The evaluation of USRA's Past Performance resulted in a Very High Level of Confidence. The Offeror demonstrated highly relevant past performance of exceptional merit in technical performance, contract management, and corporate responsiveness on recent and relevant contracts comparable to the ISRDS-2 requirements. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a Very High Level of Confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

Cost Factor

The SEB evaluated each Offeror's Cost proposal volume, including all required Cost Templates. This included verifying the following for each Offeror: (1) compliance with the RFP requirements, (2) evaluating the reasonableness of the proposed rates, fringe benefits, overhead, G&A rates, and profit; and (3) ascertaining that proposed labor rates are reasonable for the labor market in which the contract will be performed. The cost elements were analyzed, including subcontractors' costs, proposed labor rates and skill mix, indirect rates, and applicable fees. The SEB, assisted by the Price/Cost Analyst, made certain probable cost adjustments as indicated below.

ERT had the third highest total proposed and probable Costs. The Offeror's Cost proposal required a probable cost adjustment.

Orbital had the lowest total proposed and probable Costs. The Offeror's Cost proposal required a probable cost adjustment.

QinetiQ had the third lowest total proposed Cost and the second lowest probable Cost. The Offeror's Cost proposal required a probable cost adjustment.

SAIC had the second lowest total proposed Cost and third lowest probable Cost. The Offeror's Cost proposal required a probable cost adjustment.

SGT had the second highest total proposed and probable Costs. The Offeror's Cost proposal did not require a probable cost adjustment.

USRA had the highest total proposed and probable Costs. The Offeror's Cost proposal required a probable cost adjustment.

SELECTION DECISION OF THE SOURCE SELECTION AUTHORITY FOR INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT-2

FAR 15.308, "Source Selection Decision," states: "The source selection authority's (SSA) decision shall be based on a comparative assessment of proposals against all source selection criteria in the solicitation. While the SSA may use reports and analyses prepared by others, the source selection decision shall represent the SSA's independent judgment. The source selection decision shall be documented, and the documentation shall include the rationale for any business judgments and tradeoffs made or relied on by the SSA, including benefits associated with additional costs. Although the rationale for the selection decision must be documented, that documentation need not quantify the tradeoffs that led to the decision."

My selection decision represents my independent judgment. I carefully reviewed all of the SEB's findings to ensure a full understanding thereof. I did not simply count and compare the numbers of findings; rather, I considered the potential impact of each finding and its relevance to this proposed effort, against the selection criteria prescribed in the RFP.

Assessment of the SEB's findings

I carefully studied all of the findings of the SEB, and I concur with, and adopt, all of them, except for one distinct point relating to ERT, explained below. I am fully satisfied that the SEB conducted a thorough and cogent analysis of each of the proposals submitted and that their findings are appropriate and reasonable.

Selection

To reiterate, Mission Suitability is moderately more important than Past Performance, and Past Performance is significantly more important than Cost. Evaluation factors other than Cost, when combined, are significantly more important than Cost.

Mission Suitability carries the most weight and, accordingly, is the most important Factor to me. SGT and USRA submitted the two best Mission Suitability proposals, properly earning 824 points and 670 points, respectively, out of a possible 1000 points. SGT and USRA also were the only two Offerors to earn top Level of Confidence ratings, of Very High, in Past Performance, the second most important Factor.

The other four Offerors – ERT, Orbital, QinetiQ, and SAIC – each received lower Mission Suitability scores – ranging from 332 points to 550 points – and lower Level of Confidence ratings, of High, in Past Performance.

Among these four Offerors, Orbital had the weakest Mission Suitability proposal, as properly reflected in its score of 332 points. Although Orbital earned a Significant Strength for its response to Small Business Utilization, the lowest-weighted Sub-factor, its proposal did not earn any strengths in the higher weighted Sub-factors, Management Approach and Technical Understanding. Its five weaknesses – three of which rose to the level of "Significant" – in these two Sub-factors increase the risk of unsuccessful contract management and performance. Two of those three Significant Weaknesses are of particular concern to me, namely (1) its unreasonable, ineffective, and inefficient organizational structure and partnering approach and (2) its unreasonable and ineffective Technical Approach. In my judgment, although Orbital presented the lowest proposed and probable Costs, this does not offset, in significantly more important Factors, (1) its numerous weaknesses in Mission Suitability and (2) the discriminator in Past Performance favoring SGT and USRA. Therefore, I do not select Orbital for award.

QinetiQ properly earned the second lowest Mission Suitability score of 357 points. QinetiQ earned a Significant Strength for its response to Small Business Utilization, the lowest-weighted Sub-factor, and earned two other Strengths in the Management Approach Sub-factor. Although these three strengths were commendable – I was impressed with its mentoring program, and its effective and efficient management approach to the Case Study – the overall Mission Suitability proposal of QinetiQ was not

relatively, or sufficiently, strong. The five weaknesses earned by QinetiQ in Management Approach and Technical Understanding, including two properly evaluated as "Significant," eclipsed and outweighed its three strengths. The two Significant Weaknesses – for (1) its unsound, ineffective, and inefficient Technical Approach, and (2) its unreasonable, ineffective, and inefficient approach to Key Personnel – are of particular concern to me. These weaknesses increase the risk of unsuccessful contract management and performance. In my judgment, although QinetiQ presented the third lowest proposed Cost and the second lowest probable Cost, this does not offset, in significantly more important Factors, (1) its numerous weaknesses in Mission Suitability and (2) the discriminator in Past Performance favoring SGT and USRA. Therefore, I do not select QinetiQ for award.

The Mission Suitability proposal of SAIC properly earned the third lowest score of 382 points. SAIC earned two strengths: one Significant Strength in Small Business Utilization, the lowest-weighted Sub-factor, and one other Strength in the Management Approach Sub-factor. This latter Strength was for its noteworthy management approach to the Case Study. Nevertheless, the Mission Suitability proposal submitted by SAIC was not sufficiently distinctive. Its four weaknesses, two of which were "Significant," in Management Approach and Technical Understanding, eclipsed and outweighed its two strengths. I am particularly concerned with the two Significant Weaknesses, for (1) its unreasonable, ineffective, and inefficient organizational structure and partnering approach, and (2) its unsound, ineffective, and inefficient Technical Approach. These weaknesses increase the risk of unsuccessful contract management and performance. In my judgment, although SAIC presented the second lowest proposed Cost and third lowest probable Cost, this does not offset, in significantly more important Factors, (1) its numerous weaknesses in Mission Suitability and (2) the discriminator in Past Performance favoring SGT and USRA. Therefore, I do not select SAIC for award.

The Mission Suitability proposal of ERT earned the third highest score of 550 points. ERT received three Strengths – none of which rose to the level of "Significant" – in the Management Approach Sub-factor. Although they are not "Significant," I am impressed with these three Strengths – the effective plans for (1) key personnel and (2) staffing, and (3) its agile, iterative test-driven management approach to the Case Study, are commendable. Nevertheless, the Significant Weakness for its organizational structure and partnering approach, and its Weakness related to the Case Study, both increase the risk of unsuccessful contract performance. Further, ERT simply met the requirements in many areas of the RFP and SOW. As noted above, I do differ with the SEB on one distinct finding: in my opinion, ERT should have received greater credit, and a higher rating, in the Small Business Utilization Sub-factor. However, it also is my opinion that an appropriate enhancement for ERT in this lowest-weighted Sub-factor would be insufficient to place ERT in a more competitive posture in relation to the superior proposals of SGT and USRA. In consideration of all Factors, including ERT's third highest total proposed and probable Costs, I do not select it for award.

The two remaining Offerors – SGT and USRA – each earned top Past Performance Level of Confidence ratings of Very High; I did not find a discriminator between SGT and USRA within this Factor.

In Mission Suitability, both of these Offerors earned adjectival ratings of "Good" – or higher – across all of the Sub-factors. Neither Offeror received any Significant Weaknesses in Mission Suitability. Only SGT, however, received no weaknesses of any kind in this Factor.

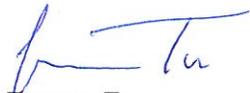
USRA had a very respectable and notable Mission Suitability proposal, which properly earned 670 points out of a possible 1000 points. It earned a total of three non-significant Strengths, two of which were particularly impressive to me: (1) its reasonable and effective organizational structure and approach; and (2) its effective and efficient Technical Approach, demonstrating a sound technical understanding of the four core research technology areas. However, USRA also received two non-significant Weaknesses, and both concern me. First, USRA earned a Weakness for its ineffective and inefficient management approach to the Case Study. In my opinion, this increases the likelihood that similar actual tasks would not be managed to optimal effect. Second, USRA earned a weakness for its failure to fully demonstrate its understanding of certain IDIQ requirements identified in the SOW. In my opinion, this increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.

SGT properly earned the highest Mission Suitability score of 824 points out of a possible 1000 points – 154 points higher than USRA. It submitted the most robust and noteworthy Mission Suitability proposal, with five strengths, including two properly evaluated as “Significant.” And, again, it had no weaknesses of any kind in Mission Suitability. Of its five strengths, most important to me were (1) its Significant Strength in the Management Approach Sub-factor, for its reasonable, effective, and efficient organizational structure and partnering approach, and (2) its Strength in the Technical Understanding Sub-factor, for its effective and efficient Technical Approach, which demonstrates a sound technical understanding of the general scope of the SOW. Overall, the Mission Suitability proposal submitted by SGT displayed a distinct and superior understanding of the requirements of the RFP and the SOW, and best demonstrates that it possesses the necessary technical understanding and capability and critical management prowess, and can support the varied, complex, and constantly evolving research and development work associated with ISRDS-2. The superiority of the SGT Mission Suitability proposal is, in my opinion, the most important discriminator in favor of SGT.

The other discriminator in favor of SGT is in the Cost Factor. SGT had lower total proposed and probable Costs than USRA. Although Cost is the least important evaluation factor, I found the lower probable Cost of the SGT proposal to be a clear and notable advantage to the Government.

The superiority of the SGT Mission Suitability proposal and its Very High Level of Confidence rating for Past Performance indicate that SGT will provide superior contract management and technical performance throughout the life of the contract. Furthermore, the SGT proposal, which offers the superior response to Mission Suitability at fair and reasonable total proposed and probable Costs, which are lower than those of USRA, its closest competitor, will provide the best value to the Government.

In conclusion, based on the above discussion of its proposal and the relative importance of the evaluation Factors set forth in the RFP, I select Stinger Ghaffarian Technologies, Inc. for contract award.



Eugene Tu
Source Selection Authority