

**SOURCE SELECTION STATEMENT  
FOR THE  
SOLAR PROBE PLUS (SPP) LAUNCH SERVICES CONTRACT**

**INTRODUCTION**

On February 27, 2015, as the designated Source Selection Authority (SSA) for the Solar Probe Plus (SPP) Launch Services Contract, I met with senior officials of the John F. Kennedy Space Center (KSC) and the appointed Source Evaluation Board (SEB) to independently review their evaluation of the United Launch Services (ULS) Final Proposal Revision (FPR). Relevant portions of the SEB's evaluation of ULS' FPR, and my decision on the selection of ULS are set forth in this Source Selection Statement.

**PROCUREMENT HISTORY**

On March 18, 2014, the NASA Flight Planning Board (FPB) requested that the Launch Services Program initiate and conduct an LSP-led acquisition process that will lead to the selection and award of a launch service for the SPP mission. The SPP science has been ranked as a top priority in the 2013 Decadal Survey and the 2009 Performance Assessment of NASA's Heliophysics Program. SPP is classified as a Class B payload, pursuant to NASA Procedural Requirement (NPR) 8705.4, Risk Classification for NASA Payloads and requires a Category 3 certified launch vehicle as currently prescribed by the NASA FPB in accordance with NASA Policy Directive (NPD) 8610.7D, Launch Services Risk Mitigation Policy for NASA-Owned and/or NASA-Sponsored Payloads/Missions.

The objective of the SPP Spacecraft (SC) is to determine the structure and dynamics of the Sun's coronal magnetic field, understand how the solar corona and wind are heated and accelerated, and determine what mechanisms accelerate and transport energetic particles. The SPP contracted launch service will include the Launch Vehicle (LV), ground support facilities and equipment, test hardware and software, and all launch services and associated effort required to integrate the payload to the LV and deliver the SC to its required orbit to include but not be limited to: program management, mission integration, launch site support, ground and flight system safety, performance assurance, processing, encapsulation, launch operations, and trajectory verification.

The development of the SPP Request for Proposals (RFP) commenced with the appointment of a Procurement Development Team (PDT). The PDT conducted market research, prepared an acquisition strategy, and developed a draft solicitation for industry comment. The SPP RFP was issued on August 26, 2014, following the PDT's review and consideration of industry comments on the draft solicitation, and the final approval of its acquisition strategy. The SPP RFP sought proposals for a Firm Fixed Price (FFP) launch services contract. Prior to release of the SPP RFP, the SSA appointed the SEB to evaluate proposals received in response to the solicitation. During the course of the procurement, a total of three RFP amendments were issued by the Contracting Officer to incorporate minor changes into the RFP.

In response to the SPP RFP, two timely proposals were received on or before the due date of November 6, 2014 from the following companies:

United Launch Services, LLC  
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation

This acquisition was conducted using other than full and open competitive procedures in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 6.302-5, "Authorized or required by statute." The Commercial Space Act of 1998, 51 U.S.C. § 50131, requires that all commercial space transportation services be procured from domestic providers.

### EVALUATION PROCESS

The RFP prescribed three evaluation factors: Mission Suitability, Past Performance, and Price, which were evaluated using the applicable procedures, adjectival ratings, levels of confidence, definitions, and/or percentile ranges specified in the RFP, FAR subpart 15.3, and NFS subpart 1815.3, "Source Selection." The RFP advised offerors of the relative order of importance of these factors stating:

Mission Suitability and Past Performance Factors, when combined, are significantly more important than the Price Factor. The Mission Suitability Factor is more important than the Past Performance Factor, which is more important than the Price Factor.

The evaluation of Mission Suitability was to assess the offeror's technical ability and approach to management of the launch service, and the proposed small business utilization. The RFP further identified three subfactors, which were to be weighted and considered in evaluating Mission Suitability as follows:

Technical Approach	750 points
Management Approach	200 points
<u>Small Business Utilization</u>	<u>50 points</u>
Total Mission Suitability	1000 points

Under the procedures established in the RFP and the applicable acquisition regulations, the SEB was to evaluate Mission Suitability proposals under each subfactor to identify significant strengths, weaknesses, significant weaknesses, deficiencies, or uncertainties requiring clarification. As a result of these findings, the SEB assigned an adjectival rating and percentile ranking/point score for each subfactor, and a total point score for Mission Suitability using the following adjectival ratings, definitions, and percentile ranges, applied at the subfactor level:

Adjectival Rating	Definitions	Percentile Range
Excellent	A comprehensive and thorough proposal of exceptional merit with one or more significant strengths. No deficiency or significant weakness exists.	91-100
Very Good	A proposal having no deficiency and which demonstrates over-all competence. One or more significant strengths have been found and strengths outbalance any weaknesses that exist.	71-90
Good	A proposal having no deficiency and which shows a reasonably sound response. There may be strengths or weaknesses, or both. As a whole, weaknesses not offset by strengths do not significantly detract from the offeror's response.	51-70
Fair	A proposal having no deficiency and which has one or more weaknesses. Weaknesses outbalance any strengths.	31-50
Poor	A proposal that has one or more deficiencies or significant weaknesses that demonstrate a lack of overall competence or would require a major proposal revision to correct.	0-30

With regard to the Technical Approach subfactor, the RFP stated the evaluation will be based on the viability (feasibility and risk) of the offeror's approach to meeting the technical requirements listed in the Performance Work Statement (PWS). The RFP also stated the evaluation will assess the offeror's overall technical approach for effectiveness, efficiency, and flexibility as well as the offeror's ability to meet or exceed the requirements of the PWS. In addition, the RFP stated: the offeror's certification plan will be evaluated to assess the feasibility and risks associated with the offeror's ability to satisfy the category 3 certification requirements of Section C, Clause 3.0, Launch Vehicle Certification; NASA will evaluate the offeror's certification plan to include the detailed schedule, data deliverables, future planned changes/upgrades to the common launch vehicle, and ability to fly what has been proposed for SPP; and, the risk that any future common launch vehicle changes may be deemed "substantial" negating the launch service contractor's category 3 certification plan will also be evaluated.

With regard to the Management Approach subfactor, the RFP stated the offeror will be evaluated on its ability to ensure launch service and mission success. The evaluation will address the offeror's response to each of the management approach requirements. In addition, the RFP stated the evaluation will be based on the offeror's: overall program management approach and mission schedule; approach to managing its subcontractors; plan for ensuring the safety and health of personnel and facilities; quality management plan; configuration management approach; reliability plan; risk mitigation program; manifest policy; approach to keep NASA and the payload customer informed on launch campaign progress, activities, and anomalies; and, approach to ensuring Government insight throughout a mission flow.

With regard to Small Business Utilization, the RFP stated the evaluation will be based on small business subcontracting and the commitment to small businesses.

With regard to the Past Performance Factor, the RFP stated that the evaluation will be conducted in accordance with FAR 15.305(a)(2) and NFS 1815.305(a)(2). The offeror's relevant performance of work similar in size, content, and complexity to the requirements of this acquisition will be evaluated. For purposes of this acquisition, relevant is a contract performed or completed within the last three years that is similar in size, content, and complexity to the

requirements of the RFP. The Government may supplement the information contained in the proposal with information obtained from other Government organizations and personnel, commercial sources, public information sources, and, if applicable, data gathered during the discussion phase of the evaluation. Emphasis will be given to the extent of recent direct experience and quality of past performance on previous contracts that are highly relevant to the effort defined in the RFP. The RFP further stated that the Government will consider the offeror's previously demonstrated: 1) contract past performance, history, and experience; 2) ability to accomplish requirements to receive milestone or performance based payments; 3) ability to perform as a launch service provider with responsibilities, including design, fabrication, vehicle and payload integration; 4) ability to meet technical requirements and performance standards for previous work; 5) ability to meet launch dates; 6) approach in determining probable root cause for less than fully successful missions and resultant actions taken to improve reliability of launch services; 7) launch vehicle history; and, 8) safety and mission assurance performance record, including any safety mishaps and associated resolution. Past performance is to be evaluated using the following level of confidence ratings as they are defined in the RFP: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low, and Neutral.

Finally, with regard to the Price Factor, the RFP stated that the evaluation will be conducted in accordance with FAR subpart 15.4, "Contract Pricing." The RFP further stated that particular attention will be given to FAR 15.404-1(b), "Price Analysis." In accordance with the RFP, the total contract evaluated price is the sum of: CLIN 1, SPP Launch Service, which is comprised of SubCLIN 1A, Standard Launch Service and Standard Mission Integration in accordance with the PWS and SPP RFP Exhibit 2; and, SubCLIN 1B, Mission Unique Services in accordance with the PWS and SPP RFP Exhibit 9.

The SEB evaluated all proposals against the evaluation criteria specified in the RFP. In addition to the evaluation of the factors and subfactors identified above, the SEB ensured all solicitation requirements established by the RFP were met. Furthermore, as part of the evaluation process, the SEB analyzed each offeror's administrative data which was comprised of financial information to determine responsibility to perform a contract of this magnitude, the model contract, acceptance of contract terms and conditions, and contract representations and certifications.

#### **INITIAL EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS, COMPETITIVE RANGE DETERMINATION, & DISCUSSIONS**

Timely proposals were received by ULS and SpaceX on or before the proposal due date of November 6, 2014. The SEB conducted an initial evaluation of the two proposals received in response to the RFP. The resulting mission suitability rating, past performance rating, and price evaluation of each offeror's proposal provided the basis for making a competitive range determination. Pursuant to FAR 15.306(c)(1), the Contracting Officer, with the concurrence of the SSA, determined that the ULS proposal was within the competitive range. The SpaceX proposal was not found to be among the most highly rated proposals and was therefore not included in the competitive range. SpaceX was notified of their exclusion from the competitive range on December 16, 2014, and on December 16, 2014, requested a post award debriefing.

Written and oral discussions were held with ULS during the period of December 16, 2014 through February 12, 2015. The discussions focused on the significant weakness, weaknesses, and uncertainties requiring clarification that the SEB identified during the initial evaluation of mission suitability and price. Upon the conclusion of discussions, an FPR was requested from ULS. A fully compliant FPR was timely received prior to the February 19, 2015 due date, including an executed proposed model contract. The SEB conducted a final evaluation of ULS' FPR and reported its findings to the SSA as discussed below.

### FPR MISSION SUITABILITY EVALUATION

The evaluation of the FPR resulted in increased Mission Suitability scores for ULS. No significant weaknesses, weaknesses, uncertainties requiring clarification, or strengths were found to remain in ULS' Mission Suitability proposal. Consequently, the SEB's report to the SSA focused on ULS' significant strengths.

Under the Mission Suitability – Technical Approach subfactor, the SEB found that ULS had no remaining weaknesses and one significant strength in its FPR. The significant strength resulted from ULS' proposed mission solution that utilized an existing common launch vehicle configuration and flight-proven third stage components while maintaining significant and prudent flight performance reserves, and conducted a significant set of preliminary analyses, which demonstrates a very high level of design maturity. This will likely result in extremely low technical risk for meeting the SPP performance and insertion accuracy requirements and limited launch period in 2018. In addition, the proposed mission solution showed that a daily, continuous 30-minute launch window is achievable throughout the specified 20-day SPP launch period and demonstrated a very high level of understanding of the analysis tasks and technical challenges to successfully fly an interplanetary mission.

Based on the proposed Mission Suitability Technical Approach and the identified significant strength, it was determined that this was a comprehensive and thorough proposal of exceptional merit with one or more significant strengths and thus the SEB rated ULS' proposal under this subfactor as **Excellent**.

Under the Mission Suitability – Management Approach subfactor, the SEB found that ULS had no weaknesses and one significant strength in its FPR. The significant strength resulted from ULS' proposal of a highly refined and detailed management approach for the procurement and integration of the third stage. ULS' proposal included a comprehensive Statement of Work (SOW) between ULS and its third stage subcontractor, and thoroughly described a third stage development effort that is functionally integrated into the NASA required mission specific design review process and which flows down the requirement for third stage subcontractor compliance with NASA's Insight and Approval clause.

Based on the above finding, the SEB rated ULS' proposal under the Management Approach subfactor as **Very Good**.

Under the Mission Suitability – Small Business Approach subfactor, the SEB found that ULS' proposal was acceptable with no weaknesses or strengths in its FPR. The proposal included a reasonably sound approach to Small Business Subcontracting and the commitment to the Small Business Program.

Based on the above, the SEB rated ULS' proposal under the Small Business Approach subfactor as **Good**.

As a result of the SEB's evaluation, the overall final Mission Suitability score for ULS was 895 out of 1,000 available points.

### FPR PAST PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

This past performance evaluation was limited to ULS and its third stage subcontractor (hereafter referred to as the ULS team) in accordance with the evaluation criteria provided in the RFP. The third stage subcontractor's past performance was evaluated because a third stage has not previously been flown on the proposed launch vehicle and is considered critical to meeting SPP's requirements. Only the third stage subcontractor's past performance as a third stage provider is being assessed as part of this evaluation since they are only providing the third stage for this effort.

Based upon information obtained from the Past Performance Information Retrieval System and other resources, the SEB found that the ULS team demonstrated exemplary past performance of work highly similar to the SPP contract in size, content, and complexity. In general, Government contracts that utilized the same launch vehicle configuration that is being proposed for SPP were deemed more relevant than commercial contracts, or Government contracts that utilized different launch vehicle configurations than that proposed for SPP. The ULS team demonstrated past performance that is very highly or highly pertinent across the SPP PWS requirements.

The ULS team demonstrated exemplary performance based on the following:

- Over 30 missions have been launched, all of which have been successful including launches of the proposed launch vehicle as well as a launch of the proposed third stage.
- ULS demonstrated outstanding launch service performance to low earth, geosynchronous, and highly complex interplanetary/earth-escape destinations while meeting all primary mission requirements. The third stage subcontractor previously developed a superior mission design solution for a similar stage based on a flight proven motor.
- The ULS team has demonstrated exceptional ability to meet launch dates.
- ULS has demonstrated very highly effective design, fabrication, vehicle and payload integration processes for very complex missions. The third stage subcontractor demonstrated exceptional performance in the design, fabrication, and integration of a similar stage based on a flight proven motor.
- The ULS team demonstrated its ability to meet or exceed milestones for numerous missions at various stages of integration. Performance in support of mission related task assignments has been exemplary.
- ULS has demonstrated superior performance in identifying anomalies, determining probable root causes, and taking actions to improve reliability of launch services.
- ULS has demonstrated an effective safety and mission assurance performance record.

Based on the above, the SEB determined that there is a **very high level of confidence** that the ULS team will successfully perform the effort required by the SPP RFP.

## FPR PRICE EVALUATION

ULS' proposed price (\$389.1M) was determined to be fair and reasonable based upon comparison of competitively proposed prices as well as by analysis of data other than certified cost or pricing data provided by ULS. The ULS FPR included a reopener clause with a not-to-exceed (NTE) value. Consequently, the evaluated price (\$419.1M) consisted of the sum of the proposed firm fixed price and the NTE value in the reopener clause.

## SOURCE SELECTION DECISION

During the presentation, I questioned the SEB on the material presented and carefully considered the detailed findings presented by the SEB. Additionally, I reviewed all the initial and final proposals and findings independently and solicited and considered the views of key senior personnel within the SEB, the Launch Services Program, the Kennedy Space Center and the Goddard Space Flight Center. These key senior personnel have responsibility related to this procurement and understood the application of the evaluation factors set forth in the RFP. The briefing yielded no significant issues, or stated concerns. My independent review of the proposals and these findings led me to the conclusion that the evaluation of ULS' proposal by the SEB was comprehensive, thorough, and well-documented. In determining the best value to the Government, I referred to the following relative order of importance of the three evaluation factors specified in the RFP:

Mission Suitability and Past Performance Factors, when combined, are significantly more important than the Price Factor. The Mission Suitability Factor is more important than the Past Performance Factor, which is more important than the Price Factor.

My selection was based on a comparative assessment of ULS' proposal against each of these source selection factors.

I examined the SEB team's mission suitability findings with regards to ULS' proposal, which included two significant strengths and no weaknesses.

The SEB team's findings revealed a significant strength in the Technical Approach subfactor resulting from ULS' proposed mission solution, which demonstrated a high level of analytical design maturity and very high level of understanding of the analysis tasks and technical challenges to successfully fly this mission. In particular, the SPP PWS required launch timing capabilities with "[m]ultiple approximately twenty-four (24) hour re-launch attempts in the event of a launch scrub[,]” and ULS' proposed daily, continuous 30-minute launch window throughout the specified twenty (20) day SPP launch period, utilizing flight-proven third stage components while maintaining significant and prudent flight performance reserves satisfied this requirement, thereby providing for daily flexibility to tolerate items beyond the launch team's immediate control. I find this to be significant given the criticality of meeting SPP's launch window.

The SEB team's findings also revealed a significant strength in the Management Approach subfactor resulting from ULS' proposal of a highly refined and detailed management approach for the procurement and integration of the third stage. Integration of a third stage into the launch vehicle represents one of the most significant challenges associated with the launch service and is of critical importance to maintaining SPP's overall mission integration schedule. I found

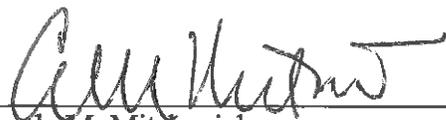
through the team's evaluation and findings that the approach has already been carefully planned and well integrated by ULS with their subcontractor.

Based upon my examination of the SEB team's findings and the aforementioned significant strengths, I find that ULS' excellent Technical Approach and very good Management Approach when combined with its good Small Business Approach, which I find acceptable with no weaknesses or strengths and a sound approach to Small Business Subcontracting and the commitment to the Small Business Program, demonstrates that ULS' overall Mission Suitability proposal is the best solution for successful performance of the SPP contract. I also examined the SEB team's evaluation of ULS' past performance. I note that the SEB team found the ULS team demonstrated exemplary performance of work highly similar to the SPP contract in size, content, and complexity. In particular I take note of ULS' 100% success rate over 30+ missions in the prior 3 years, including several missions that flew with the same launch vehicle being proposed for SPP. ULS has demonstrated outstanding launch service performance to numerous orbits, including highly complex interplanetary/earth-escape destinations, of particular interest given SPP's mission profile. ULS' third stage subcontractor has also previously developed a superior mission design solution for a similar stage based on a flight proven motor. Finally, the ULS team has demonstrated exceptional ability to meet planetary launch dates, a factor that is particularly salient given SPP's science window. Based upon my independent examination of the SEB team's evaluation, I agree with the SEB's rating of "Very High" and accordingly, have a very high level of confidence that the ULS team will successfully perform the effort required by the SPP RFP.

Finally, I examined ULS' evaluated price, taking into account the reopener clause with a not-to-exceed (NTE) value. I concur with the Contracting Officer's assessment that based upon the combination of adequate price competition and the evaluation of other than certified cost and pricing data, ULS' price is fair and reasonable.

In sum, I found that ULS' proposal represented the best value to the Government based on their superior technical and management solution to meeting SPP's requirements, their excellent past performance record which was deserving of a "Very High Level of Confidence" rating, and the reasonableness of the evaluated price of \$419.1M.

Accordingly, after considering the above selection criteria, including their relative order of importance, and the SEB's evaluation of the proposal, exercising my independent judgment, I select ULS for award of the SPP Launch Services Contract.



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03/09/2015  
Date