

**Source Selection Statement for the NASA Postdoctoral Program (NPP)  
Solicitation Number NNH1449602R**

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On July 28, 2015, I, along with senior officials from NASA Headquarters (HQ) and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), met with the Source Evaluation Board (SEB) appointed to evaluate proposals in connection with the NASA Postdoctoral Program (NPP) procurement. A full briefing of the results of the evaluation conducted by the SEB was presented to me, resulting in this source selection decision.

***Procurement Description***

The purpose of the NPP contract is to procure administrative support and coordinate research opportunities between Mission Directorates and Centers to provide highly qualified postdoctoral researchers the opportunity to conduct research at NASA. Participants are postdoctoral level scientists and engineers who apply their special knowledge and talents to research areas that are of interest to them and to the host center.

The NPP Request for Proposal (RFP) was released on January 28, 2015, with two subsequent amendments issued.

The resultant contract will be a Cost-Plus-Fixed-Fee (CPFF) Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract with an effective ordering period of 5 years.

This procurement was conducted as a Full and Open Competition under NAICS Code 541612 Human Resources Consulting Services, Size Standard \$14M.

***Proposals Submitted***

On February 27, 2015, NASA received four timely proposals from the following:

Global Science and Technology, Inc. (GST)
National Academy of Sciences (NAS)
Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU)
Universities Space Research Association (USRA)

***Evaluation Procedures***

The SEB evaluated proposals in accordance with the source selection procedures identified in Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) part 15.3 "Source Selection," and NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) 1815.3. The Source Evaluation Board procedures at NFS 1815.370, NASA Source Evaluation Boards, were applied.

The RFP listed three evaluation factors, Mission Suitability, Cost, and Past Performance. The RFP specified the relative order of importance of these factors as follows:

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The Cost Factor is significantly less important than the combined importance of the Mission Suitability Factor and the Past Performance Factor.

As individual Factors, Past Performance is less important than the Mission Suitability Factor but more important than the Cost Factor.

The RFP provided that each Offeror's Mission Suitability proposal would be evaluated and point scored. This procedure required the Government to evaluate proposals under each subfactor, identifying Significant Strengths, Strengths, Weaknesses, Significant Weaknesses, or Deficiencies; to assign an adjectival rating for each subfactor based on the findings; to determine a percentile score for each subfactor based on the findings; and to calculate a total point score for the Mission Suitability factor using the weighted sum of subfactor scores. The Mission Suitability subfactors were evaluated using the adjectival ratings, definitions and percentile ranges at NFS 1815.305(a)(3)(A). The RFP defined the Mission Suitability Factor as consisting of the following subfactors, and assigned points to each as indicated:

Subfactor A	Technical Approach	550
Subfactor B	Management Approach	400
Subfactor C	Small Business Utilization	50

Regarding the Cost factor, the RFP provided for the evaluation, but not numerical scoring or adjectival rating of cost. The RFP advised Offerors that the proposed costs would be assessed to determine reasonableness and cost realism. The proposed costs for the Representative Task Order (RTO), the total Firm-Fixed-Price (FFP) Phase-in and the rates proposed in Attachment B, Direct Labor Rates, Indirect Rates and Fee Matrices were assessed for reasonableness and cost realism. The RFP provided that the cost evaluation would be conducted in accordance with FAR 15.305(a)(1) and NFS 1815.305(a)(1)(B). Offerors were referred to FAR 2.101(b) for a definition of "cost realism" and to FAR 15.404-1(d) for a discussion of "cost realism analysis" and "probable cost." For purposes of selection, the RFP indicated that the phase-in price, probable RTO Costs (less the pass-through cost for Fellows, but inclusive of proposed fixed fee), and any costs risk associated with the proposal would be considered. Finally, the RFP provided that both proposed and probable cost would reflect the Offeror's proposed fee amount, meaning the proposed fee would not be adjusted for cost realism purposes in the probable cost assessment.

Past Performance evaluations were based on FAR Part 15 and were conducted in accordance with provision M.5 of the solicitation. The RFP further provided for the evaluation of the Past Performance factor using levels of confidence ratings to assess the Government's confidence in the Offeror's ability to perform NPP requirements. The RFP defined the following levels of confidence ratings: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low, and Neutral. Under this factor, the SEB was required to evaluate each Offeror's recent and relevant performance of work similar in size and content to the NPP requirements. As stated in provision L.12, all past

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performance references must meet the “recent” and minimum average annual cost/fee expenditures criteria of \$1M within the last 3 years for both prime contractor references and significant subcontractor references in order to be evaluated. For purposes of past performance, the term “Offeror” refers to a prime contractor and its significant subcontractors.

An Offeror’s past performance record indicates the relevant quantitative and qualitative aspects of performing services or delivering products similar in size and content to the requirements of this acquisition. The SEB assigned an overall level of confidence rating reflecting its subjective evaluation of the information contained in the written narrative, past performance evaluation input provided through customer questionnaires, and other references

***Detailed Results of the Evaluation***

As NASA’s Source Selection Authority for this procurement, I appointed the SEB, which included a team of technical and business members and consultants from appropriate disciplines, to assist in proposal evaluation. The SEB completed its initial evaluation of proposals and documented its findings in a written presentation and Cost report. The SEB’s written evaluation results were followed by a presentation summarizing its overall evaluation results to me on July 28, 2015. Minor documentation issues and clerical errors identified during the presentation were corrected in the final documentation which was provided to me on August 17, 2015. A summary of the results of the SEB’s evaluation is as follows:

**Mission Suitability Factor**

The table below provides the adjectival ratings assigned in each Mission Suitability subfactor and the total Mission Suitability scores after evaluating each subfactor in accordance with RFP Section M.4.

Offeror	Subfactor A	Subfactor B	Subfactor C	Total Score
GST	Good	Good	Excellent	695
NAS	Good	Good	Fair	598
ORAU	Good	Good	Good	655
USRA	Excellent	Good	Good	833

**GST**

**Subfactor A: Technical Approach**

GST received 2 strengths, and 1 weakness, resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

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Strength #1

GST received a strength for the level of detail and specificity in its discussion of the RTO, including timeline, dependencies, logistics, risks and possible approaches to mitigation, demonstrating a clear and complete understating of the RTO's subtasks and processes inherent in the administration aspect of the NPP.

Strength #2

GST received a strength for its efficient and effective approach to managing the NPP application and review cycles.

Weakness #1

GST's proposal received a weakness for inadequate detail in its approach to assembling peer review panels, reducing the Government's confidence in the quality of the peer review and posing performance risks to the overall outcome of NPP.

**Subfactor B: Management Approach**

GST received 1 strength and 1 weakness, resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

Strength #1

GST received a strength for its well-articulated plan for the phase-in period, clearly identifying the workflow for the phase-in period over time and providing detail on the phase-in organization management structure and key personnel.

Weakness #1

GST received a weakness for the proposal's lack of clarity in the approach to managing Visa and Immigration procedures for the NPP fellows.

**Subfactor C: Small Business Utilization**

GST received 1 significant strength, resulting in an adjectival rating of Excellent for this subfactor.

Significant Strength #1

GST received a significant strength for a thorough Small Business Utilization Plan with subcontracting values that exceeded the Government Goals. Additionally, GST's plan

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demonstrates a very good commitment to small business through the use of enforceable agreements and the intent to participate in NASA's Mentor Protégé Program.

**NAS**

**Subfactor A: Technical Approach**

NAS received 1 strength and 1 weakness, resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

**Strength #1**

NAS's proposal received a strength for proposing an NPP website with useful features, including the ability to edit research opportunities online, thereby promoting efficiency.

**Weakness #1**

NAS received a weakness for not demonstrating an understanding of the Peer Review process requirement for panels to meet virtually to review and rank candidates. The NAS proposal did not describe a process in which reviewers would discuss the merit of all applications.

**Subfactor B: Management Approach**

NAS received 2 weakness resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

**Weakness #1**

NAS received a weakness for lack of sufficient description of day-to-day decision-making, priority-setting, Program Manager authority, problem-solving, and workflow coordination in its proposed management approach.

**Weakness #2**

NAS received a weakness for not describing the workflow and timeline of the proposed phase-in activities in a manner sufficient to ensure continuity and a smooth transition with the incumbent.

**Subfactor C: Small Business Utilization**

NAS received 1 weakness, resulting in an adjectival rating of Fair for this subfactor.

**Weakness #1**

NAS received a weakness for a Small Business Utilization Plan which did not meet the overall Government's Recommended Goals, increasing the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.

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**ORAU**

**Subfactor A: Technical Approach**

ORAU received 2 strengths and 1 weakness, resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

**Strength #1**

ORAU received a strength for the level of detail and specificity in their discussion of the RTO, including timeline, dependencies, logistics, risks and possible approaches to mitigation, which demonstrate a clear and complete understanding of the RTO's subtasks and processes inherent in the administrative aspects of the NPP.

**Strength #2**

ORAU received a strength for their attractive features proposed that, together, would enhance the NPP by improving recruiting success. The proposed elements would make the NPP more effective and likely to attract high quality applicants.

**Weakness #1**

ORAU received a weakness for not demonstrating an understanding of the Peer Review process requirement for panels to meet virtually to review and rank candidates. The ORAU proposal did not describe a process in which reviewers would conduct real-time discussions of the merit of the applications.

**Subfactor B: Management Approach**

ORAU received no findings resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

**Subfactor C: Small Business Utilization**

ORAU received no findings resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

**USRA**

**Subfactor A: Technical Approach**

USRA received 1 significant strength and 2 strengths, resulting in an adjectival rating of Excellent for this subfactor.

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Significant Strength #1

USRA received a significant strength for the carefully designed and thorough approach to the assembly and management of the NPP peer review panels, with focused attention on scientific quality of the reviewers and the review products. USRA provided a well-articulated, in-depth description of the criteria which will be used to select the peer reviewers. This level of integrity in the selection process allows NASA to identify the best and the brightest Fellows.

Strength #1

USRA received a strength for the level of detail and specificity in their discussion of the task, including timeline, dependencies, logistics, risks and possible approaches to mitigation demonstrates a clear and complete understanding of the RTO's inherent subtasks and processes.

Strength #2

USRA received a strength for their proposed Technical Approach to performing the RTO with proposed enhancements that will improve the efficiency of the Program and make it more attractive to qualified candidates.

**Subfactor B: Management Approach**

USRA received 1 strength resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

Strength #1

USRA received a strength for providing a clear, well-articulated plan for the phase-in period, including a clear timeline, assembly of a phase-in support team and a clear and effective plan to facilitate communication between the incumbent, Fellows, and NASA.

**Subfactor C: Small Business Utilization**

USRA received no findings resulting in an adjectival rating of Good for this subfactor.

**Cost Factor**

The SEB evaluated the total proposed cost and determined the Government's probable cost for all Offerors. Probable cost adjustments were made to resolve inconsistencies across exhibits and correct mathematical errors for cost realism purposes. USRA had the lowest proposed and probable cost. USRA's probable cost was approximately 1% lower than GST's and ORAU's probable cost and 2% lower than NAS. The SEB found the IDIQ rates proposed by all Offerors to be reasonable.

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**Past Performance Factor**

The SEB assigned an overall Level of Confidence rating to each Offeror, which reflected its subjective evaluation of the information contained in the written narrative, past performance evaluation input provided through customer questionnaires, and other references. The results of the evaluation and overall ratings are summarized below:

Offeror	Overall Confidence Rating
GST	High
NAS	Very High
ORAU	Very High
USRA	Very High

**GST**

GST received a High Level of confidence past performance rating based on very highly rated performance on multiple low to highly relevant contracts performed by GST and its proposed significant subcontractor. Based on the Offeror's and its significant subcontractor's performance record, there is a High level of confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

**NAS**

NAS received a Very High Level of confidence past performance rating based on its very highly rated performance on multiple very highly relevant contracts. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a Very High level of confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

**ORAU**

ORAU received a Very High Level of confidence past performance rating based on its very highly rated performance on multiple highly to very highly relevant contracts. 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**

USRA received a Very High Level of confidence past performance rating based on its very highly rated performance on multiple moderate to very highly relevant contracts. Based on the Offeror's performance record, there is a Very High level of confidence that the Offeror will successfully perform the required effort.

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***Source Selection Decision***

I carefully reviewed the SEB's documentation entitled "Presentation to the Source Selection Authority, NASA Postdoctoral Program (NPP)" and accompanying "NPP Cost Evaluation Report." On July 28, 2015, I, the Source Selection Authority, along with several ex-officio advisors, met with the Source Evaluation Board to hear the SEB's findings and evaluation. I determined that the findings presented by the SEB, as documented in its presentation and the accompanying cost report were detailed, consistent with the evaluation criteria in the NPP 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 the evaluation of cost and past performance. Further, I solicited the views of my ex-officio advisors in their areas of expertise. I determined that the findings were reasonable and valid for the purpose 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, Past Performance Factor is less important than the Mission Suitability Factor but more important than the Cost Factor.

Regarding the Mission Suitability Factor, the most important factor, I noted that the proposal submitted by USRA was technically superior to the proposals submitted by GST, NAS and ORAU based on the content of the findings. I also found that USRA's proposal received the highest overall total point score, which was significantly higher than GST, NAS and ORAU.

Regarding the Mission Suitability, Subfactor A was the most heavily weighted subfactor. I first noted that USRA's Excellent rating and score were substantially higher than that of GST's, NAS's and ORAU's Good rating and score. I then closely reviewed all evaluation findings for each Offeror. USRA received a significant strength for their proposed NPP Peer Review Process. I was impressed by USRA's level of integrity in the selection process allowing NASA to identify the best and the brightest Fellows. In addition, their ability to identify peer reviewers of national and international prominence, USRA also received two strengths in the areas of understanding the scope of the RTO requirements and their proposed enhancements to the technical approach of the NPP. GST, ORAU and NAS did not receive any significant strengths in this subfactor. GST and ORAU received two strengths; whereas, NAS received only one strength. Further, I noted that USRA did not receive any weaknesses in Subfactor A in

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comparison to GST, NAS, and ORAU each receiving one weakness. In sum, I concluded that USRA had a very substantial advantage over GST, NAS, and ORAU in Subfactor A.

Regarding Mission Suitability, Subfactor B was the second most important subfactor, I noted that all Offerors received Good ratings and similar scores. I then closely reviewed the findings. GST and USRA both received a strength for their well-articulated phase-in plans. However, GST received a weakness for the lack of clarity to their management approach for handling Visa and immigration procedures. NAS also received two weaknesses in this subfactor for their lack of information to evaluate the effectiveness of their management approach and incomplete phase-in plan. ORAU did not receive any strengths or weaknesses in this subfactor. Given the content of the findings, the Good rating and small variance in scores, I did not find any meaningful discriminators between the Offerors in Subfactor B.

In Mission Suitability, Subfactor C Small Business Utilization. I noted GST received an Excellent rating, NAS received a Fair rating, ORAU and USRA both received a Good rating. GST received a significant strength for its Small Business Utilization Plan and commitment to small businesses, giving it the competitive edge in Subfactor C, the lowest weighted of the three subfactors.

Observing the subfactor weighting scheme set forth in the NPP RFP, I found that USRA's Mission Suitability proposal, which received a significantly higher point score than the other Offerors' proposals, was the technically superior proposal. I also found that, following adjustments, USRA had the lowest probable cost. Finally, I noted that USRA, along with ORAU and NAS, received the highest Past Performance level of confidence rating of Very High. As USRA had the superior Mission Suitability proposal, lowest probable cost, and a Very High level of confidence rating in Past Performance, I concluded its proposal represented the best value to the Government.

Therefore, I select Universities Space Research Association (USRA) for award of the NASA Postdoctoral Program (NPP).



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Dr. Marc Allen  
Source Selection Authority