PROCUREMENT OFFICER'S DETERMINATION
Intergovernmental Cooperative Purchasing
COMAR 21.05.09.04

Department/Procurement Agency: Department of General Services

Contract Term: From the date of execution of the Participating Addendum by the Participating Entity through September 14, 2026

Amount: NTE $98,400,000

Category: Information Technology

Contract Type: Indefinite Quantity with Fixed Unit Prices

Name and address of selected Contractor: Strategic Communications
310 Evergreen Road
Louisville KY 40243

Scope Description:

The State of Maryland requires Cloud Services available through Amazon Web Services (AWS). The Contractor shall provide the State with AWS account(s) to permit Client to order, access, and use Cloud Services, for its business purposes. Cloud Services may include but are not limited to public-facing portal; storage; archiving; web services and web application runtime environments; relational and non-relational databases; infrastructure-as-a-service, platform-as-a-service, and software-as-a-service for Linux and Windows based computing resources; networking; storage and related technology services; and associated development and testing environments.

The State has been utilizing the AWS platform with a focus in IaaS delivery services. The State is currently hosting a variety of different systems in the AWS Cloud that provide different functions back to State agency networks via private lease connections into multiple AWS Direct Connects for fault tolerance and redundancy purposes.

Basis for Selection:

A Request for Response was released to the service providers awarded under the NASPO ValuePoint Cloud Solutions 2016-2026 contract. The requesting information regarding their offerings under the NASPO Contract and how those offerings would meet the State's needs and requirements. Of the service providers that were sent the request, 6 submitted responses. Of the 6 responses 3 providers were found not to meeting the requirements in the request and were not invited to the next step of an oral presentation. They included:

Carahsoft – Provided a high-level service plan, no concrete detail that explained how the services would be provided. They did not provide a work or implementation/transition plan, no process details or

workflow provided for Problem Escalation or response time, no mention of FedRamp certification, limited training and did not provide standard operating procedures.

Insight – Work plan was vague with very little detail. It appeared Insight would rely on AWS more than its own expertise and no methodology was discussed. The implementation plan did not cover scope requirements and appeared to cover a migration of services to a more managed service which is not what the State requires. The evaluation team was unable to determine if Insight was FedRamp certified. Insight did not provide a service level agreement, a schedule for transition, its invoicing/billing process, standard operating procedures or ordering procedures. In addition, its response did not include a Problem Escalation Procedure nor was training offered.

Unisys – Provided a short response which consisted of a repeat of the Request for Response with one word or single sentence responses to most requirements. Unisys provided no details on how the services would be provided and the evaluation team was unable to assess any cloud experience. Unisys did not provide a work plan, implementation plan or methodology, service level agreement or Problem Escalation Procedure. Limited information was provided on cost of services and support, and the evaluation team could not determine if it was FedRamp certified. Training was offered but it depended on the topic. The invoicing/billing, ordering process response was limited.

The remaining 3 providers, A&T Systems, Strategic Communications, and TCC, met the requirements of the request and were invited for oral presentations.

EVALUATION

Oral Presentations were scheduled for each of the 3 providers. Oral presentations were made to the evaluation team reviewing their submissions and offerings. The evaluation team based its evaluations on the following criteria as outlined in the Request for Response:

1. Product portfolio sold: Amazon Web Services products/services sold and discount level
2. Cost: service/support prices, labor prices
3. Security: FedRAMP certifications, firewalls, security standard compliance (NIST, IRS 1075, HIPPA)
4. Services provided: DevOps, infrastructure, experience with Microsoft products, automation, agile development, cloud migration services, and training

Technical Capability:

Each of the 3 providers demonstrated they could fulfill the State's requirements. Capability is not the physical ability to provide the services but rather the track record of the staff leading the effort. After the oral presentations were completed, the evaluation team felt Strategic Communications was better prepared. Strategic demonstrated that it understood the scope of work and geared its solution/transition plan (20 days) accordingly. Strategic brought its success stories (working with multiple state agencies, outside of Maryland) and highlighted its direct reseller experience. Strategic Communications is also security focused and has the experience in building services that can been rigorous requirements, like HIPAA, for state government. Strategic's proposed support services and its focus on certification,

demonstrated to the evaluation team that it can be considered a valuable provider in the provision of cloud services.

A&T Systems was top heavy during the presentation and despite having cleared initial review, could not articulate an understanding of the State's requirements. A&T Systems failed to adequately plan the time allotted for the oral presentation and could not finish the presentation on security and application management. A&T Systems has served dozens of state and local agencies and this experience showed in its strong transition plan. Its professional services capabilities also came through, and its base hourly rate for each labor category listed was extremely competitive. Unfortunately, A&T Systems had difficulty putting the solution together and presenting a plan, focused too much on its business acumen, and lost sight of the scope.

TCC has the experience in delivering the technologies and processes required to be successful and is keen on metrics as well. TCC came across as an organization that believed in a collaborative approach to doing business and took pride in highlighting success stories by following processes, owning issues, and driving projects until completion. The evaluation team was concerned that TCC might not have the right mix of experience to manage a large contract such as this engagement. This concern showed in its initial transition plan, which was over 50 days. In addition, it brought in an AWS reseller to assist them with billing and account provisioning. In addition, TCC was only providing a minimum discount on AWS consumption with the exact discount percentage varying until it had completed an inventory of any existing AWS accounts (rather than offer pricing based on the "total spend" provided by the State during the question/response period prior to submission of responses).

Technical Capability Ranking:

1. Strategic Communications
2. A&T Systems
3. TCC

Communication:

During the oral presentations the evaluation team assessed the communication skills for each provider on clarity, honesty, transparency and service levels. TCC and Strategic Communications demonstrated that they could respond to the State within 24 hours or less to issues and questions. The evaluation team agreed that both TCC and Strategic Communications responded to follow-up questions quickly and clearly and that the State could rely on Strategic Communications to communicate with the State on a consistent basis. A&T's presentation was very heavy with marketing and did not follow the agenda of the presentation and did not sufficiently address the technical requirements. Unfortunately, because A&T spent so much time on marketing and not how it would provision the services, they ran out of time and could not complete their presentation.

Communication Ranking:

1. Strategic Communications
2. TCC
3. A&T Systems

Cost and Discounts:

Cost was a significant consideration in every transaction. In the case of Strategic Communications, its cost of service: discounts (23% on AWS native services), professional service labor rates, discount on procuring services from Marketplace (5%) and discounts on Training (35% with select vendors) surpassed both A&T Systems and TCC. A&T Systems was ranked second with competitive rates (20% discount on the Enterprise Support cost based on the AWS spend) while TCC wanted to do discovery before providing its discounts. In addition, during the oral presentation, Strategic Communications was able to demonstrate its experience in cloud cost optimization and savings which will help the State further reduce its AWS cloud cost spend.

Cost Ranking:

1. Strategic Communications
2. A&T Systems
3. TCC

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The Evaluation Matrix:

	Weight	Points	Weight* Points		Weight *Points		Weight* Points
		A&T		**Strategic**		**TCC**	
Written Proposal	20%	3	0.6	2	0.4	1	0.2
Cost and Discounts	40%	2	0.8	3	1.2	1	0.4
Technical/Communication/Orals	40%	1	0.4	3	1.2	2	0.8
Total		6	1.8	8	2.8	4	1.4

AWARD

Based on the careful evaluation of technical and financial responses and orals, the recommendation of the evaluation team is to award to Strategic Communications based on the most advantageous offer to the State of Maryland.

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Larry Hogan | Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford | Lt. Governor
Michael G. Leahy | Secretary
Lance Schine | Deputy Secretary

Determination By:

Susan Howell
Susan Howell (Apr 5, 2022 15:12 EDT)

Date: Apr 5, 2022

DoIT, Procurement Officer

Approved by:

Lance Schine -DoIT- (Apr 6, 2022 06:12 EDT)

Date: Apr 6, 2022

DoIT, Secretary

Approved by:

M. C. Zinn

Date: 4/6/2022

DGS Chief Procurement Officer