

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Headquarters
Washington, DC 20546-0001



February 18, 2016

Reply to Attn of: OLIA/2015-00786:KM:eel

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman Emeritus
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Sensenbrenner:

Thank you for your letter dated November 18, 2015, regarding open competition under the NASA Integrated Communications Services (NICS) contract. In 2011, NASA competitively awarded the NICS contract to Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to manage, maintain, and positively transform NASA's communications services. NASA is currently in the midst of this ten-year contract with SAIC. NASA has conducted a thorough review of the issues raised in your letter, providing the following answers to the specific questions posed in the letter.

Your letter requests a copy of a June 17, 2015, presentation regarding the External Border Protection (EBPro) project. The purpose of the EBPro project is to improve the security of NASA's networks and information technology (IT) infrastructure. SAIC has informed NASA that it continues to conduct product selections for several elements of the EBPro solution, as the NICS contract requires, and that two more key elements are still undergoing requirements validation and product testing. At this time, NASA is unable to release the requested presentation since it was created as part of a planned product selection process and contains competition sensitive information. Additionally, the presentation contains highly sensitive information affecting the Agency's ability to provide a safe and secure environment for persons and property as well as NASA's critical infrastructure information.

Your letter also requests "An explanation of whether and why the NICS Approved Product List (APL) includes the products of only one manufacturer for its LAN wired and wireless network approved product line." In fact, the NICS APL for Local Area Network (LAN) wireless contains two vendors, and the NICS APL for LAN wired contains one vendor. In order to efficiently meet the communications architecture that NASA has established in the NICS contract, SAIC has defined internal engineering processes such as the APL and standard design guides to achieve standardization. Through the APL process, SAIC defines system requirements to meet NASA's target

architecture and service requirements, then conducts market research and selects vendor products that best meet NASA's needs. NASA is then able to concur in SAIC's product recommendations. Under the NICS contract, SAIC determines when it is in NASA's best interest to either conduct a competitive selection process for a product or proceed with only one vendor's product on the APL (supported by a business case). In reaching this determination, SAIC compares numerous products and considers many relevant factors, such as: product cost, cost of maintenance and operations, standardization efficiencies, financial viability of the manufacturer, independent product ratings (such as Gartner or Forrester), support staff training, supply chain management, and total cost of ownership to NASA.

Your letter requests "An explanation of NASA's role in the development and modification of the NICS APL." Pursuant to the terms of the NICS contract, NASA's Communications Services Office (CSO) Service Element Manager reviews all APL product recommendations, the rationale for selection, and provides concurrence. SAIC then briefs the NASA Communications Services Board on the APL product selection, rationale and alignment with the target architecture. For NICS Fixed-Price subcontracting arrangements and vendor procurements over \$500K and for all cost-reimbursement, letter, or time & materials subcontracts, SAIC is required to present its product selection to the NASA Contracting Officer (CO), along with the business case analysis and rationale for product selection. The NASA CO, along with a CSO technical representative, reviews the product selection process and the rationale for the selected product, and provides SAIC with consent to proceed. The NASA CO also periodically reviews and provides input on subcontracting procurements under \$500K.

Your letter also asks the following questions:

1. Does NASA support only one manufacturer being listed on the NICS LAN wired and wireless network APL?
2. Does NASA support the inclusion of multiple qualified manufacturers on this list?

As stated above, the NICS APL for LAN wireless contains two vendors, and the NICS APL for LAN wired contains one vendor. While NASA supports the inclusion of multiple qualified manufacturers on the APL through a competitive product selection process as provided under the terms of the NICS contract, the NICS contract does not require all APL products to be competed. In certain instances, and as allowed under the terms of the NICS contract, NASA has accepted SAIC's recommendations for the continuation of one product on an APL when SAIC's recommendations have been supported by a strong business case and rationale. Also, these APL items may be selected for a product competition in the future when the products reach end of life or meet other criteria.

NASA has conducted a thorough review of the issues raised in your letter and determined that any issues that NICS subcontractors (or alternate vendors) have regarding product selections are a contractual matter between those entities and SAIC, the NICS prime contractor. NASA recommends that if any subcontractors have further concerns, they should be addressed directly to SAIC.

We appreciate your interest in this matter and trust this information will be useful.

Sincerely,



L. Seth Statler
Associate Administrator
for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs