CMS Guide for
Strategic Partners Acquisition Readiness Contract Services (SPARC)
ID/IQ Contract Administration

Introduction:

This short document provides an introduction to the SPARC Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract and a process for ordering components to follow in awarding task orders under the SPARC IDIQ. SPARC is a contract for IT services to support CMS Information Technology (IT) systems through all stages of the system development life cycle.

What is SPARC?

SPARC is the new ten-year multiple award IDIQ contract available to all components within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to procure their IT requirements. The purpose of this contract is to provide strategic, technical, and program management advice, guidance and support services to CMS to facilitate the modernization of business processes and supporting systems and their operations. These systems will include the Federal Healthcare Exchange and Medicare/Medicaid information technology systems. Other Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Operating Divisions (OPDIVs) may place orders under this contract as well.

Type of Contracts:

This is a multiple award IDIQ contract with provisions for pricing arrangements including, but not limited to, cost-plus-fixed-fee (CPFF), cost-plus- award-fee (CPAF), cost plus incentive (CPI), firm-fixed-price (FFP), firm fixed price award fee (FFPAF), fixed price incentive (FPI), time and materials (T&M) and labor hour (LH). Specific tasks and/or work to be performed will be detailed in, and solicited by, individual task orders issued under this IDIQ contract. The IDIQ contract will be divided into 2 pools, a Small Business pool and an unrestricted pool, so that a portion of the tasks can be reserved for small business participation.

Why Use SPARC?

The SPARC IDIQ offers specific benefits to components within CMS, one of which is the use of a CMS-developed and promoted IT contract vehicle. SPARC task orders may offer a faster procurement timeline (4-6 months) versus full and open procurement (9-12 months), incorporating the new Acquisition Plan (AP) guidelines as updated by the HHS Acquisition Regulations (HHSAR). There is also the cost benefits as the task orders solicited and awarded under SPARC do not include an administrative fee as found on IDIQ's outside of the agency. Lastly, the large diversity of technically capable business entities under the SPARC IDIQ environment allows for teaming arrangements and partnering (subcontracting) based on the specific requirements of each task order.

While there are other potential contract vehicles available to business users, the SPARC IDIQ has been established to encompass all the IT services/requirement areas which business users may need, with both large and small businesses capable of fulfilling these needs. More specifically, the following are the service categories for information technology professional services under the SPARC IDIQ Contract:

- Initiation, Concept, and Planning Services
- Requirements Services
- Design Services
- Development Services
- Testing Services
- Security Control Assessment (SCA) Services
- Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) Services
- Maintenance Services
- Support Services
- Data Request Services
- Help Desk Services

SPARC, as an IDIQ, has pre-qualified all of the participating business partners for their corporate capacity, past performance, and Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) as determined by the Standard CMMI Appraisal Method for Process Improvement (SCAMPI).

How to Use the SPARC IDIQ:

The use of SPARC is no different from and is similar to using any other procurement vehicle. Business component representatives (Contracting Officer's Representative-COR, Government Task Leads-GTL, and/or Division Directors) should reach out to their respective OAGM counterparts (Contracting Officer-CO, Contract Specialist-CS) or their respective OPDIV contract shop to indicate a new effort or re-procurement is being sought and they wish to use the SPARC IDIQ for that effort. All necessary procurement procedures and documents needed for any other procurement effort are the same for using SPARC – e.g. Sources Sought, Acquisition Plan (AP), Statement of Work (SOW), and Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE).

Additional information as to the specific process for initiating the task order process can be found on the Task Order Procurement Guide. However, users should reach out to their respective contract shop for specific procurement documents and procedures. For other questions, please submit a message to the SPARC Resource Mailbox, at: SPARCResource@cms.hhs.gov.