

NOAALink User's Quarterly



*Service. Partnership. Commitment.
Where Business and IT Connect.*

August 2014

FY2015 is Coming...

The NOAALink Program connects the information technology needs in support of NOAA's far-flung organizations and the efficient use of financial and staff resources to ensure the continuing success of NOAA's mission. Never has that been more evident than in FY2014. As our year busily concludes ensuring your FY2014 requirements are awarded, we should all be proud of what was achieved through NOAALink.

The ongoing mission of NOAALink is to deliver NOAA's information technology acquisitions in a timely, efficient, and targeted manner. Initiatives targeted for implementation in fiscal year 2015 will address an ever-present need to increase sharing of IT resources and solutions across NOAA, within the Department of Commerce, and even across the federal government. NOAALink will contribute via initiatives such as the Public IaaS Cloud, a broad ELA for Microsoft products, and continued support for a common approach to cyber security assessment and authorization.

At its core, NOAALink fosters acquisition initiatives that cut across all of NOAA to share costs, drive IT efficiencies in service delivery, and facilitate contract execution for much needed IT products and services. In FY2014, the Satellite Mission Operations and Maintenance Support contract became one of our largest awards ever and the Strategic Management Services contract was refreshed for continued coordination of IT support services. In FY2015, the NOAALink 8(a) vendor pool will be re-competed and the Small Business vendor pool will be refreshed.

All of these successes are accomplished with a high level of communication and cooperation among acquisition and IT staffs. Close communication across headquarters operations in FY2014 improved consistency in policies and procedures. Building on that success, we will reach out to the NOAA field offices in FY2015, especially the Western and Eastern regional operations and the main field locations for NOAA's core operating organizations. Only through close communication and consistency in how we all utilize NOAALink will we continue the successful support of NOAA's mission through more innovative and cost effective technological solutions to our IT acquisition needs.



Please engage and communicate with us and leverage our resources in NOAALink to make FY2015 the most successful year ever for NOAA!

WHAT'S NEW AT NOAALINK

Invoice and Deliverables Process Change

Currently, monthly report and invoice submissions for each NOAALink task order are separate, unrelated processes. In an effort to ensure contract deliverables are being met, submission of monthly reports will become a prerequisite for invoicing. This process change affects contractor, Contracting Officer Representative (COR), and Task Manager (TM) responsibilities as they relate to core contractor task orders.

As always, contractors will be required to submit Monthly Progress Status Reports (MPSRs) and Level-of-Effort Spend Plans (T&M contracts only) for each task order by the 15th of every month. Starting in September as a pilot month and then officially in October, contractors will submit those deliverables directly to NOAALink for distribution to TMs. TMs should approve those deliverables prior to the contractor submitting the corresponding invoices for that month.

Everyone affected by this process change will get full details in meetings scheduled on August 27.

If you have any questions about NOAALink or the NOAALink process, please contact us at (301) 628-5700 or via email at NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov. Questions pertaining to invoices may be directed to NOAALink.Invoice@noaa.gov.

New Frequently Asked Questions

You can find these and more NOAALink frequently asked questions (FAQs) on our [website](#):

Q: Who has authority to sign the IT Compliance in Acquisitions Checklist (IT Security Checklist) as the Cognizant OCIO Point of Contact under question 5A?

A: Line Office ACIOs have the authority to sign, or may further designate this authority, in writing, to federal employees in IT Security Officer, System Owner, or Information System Security Officer positions.

Q: Is there additional documentation required for a purchase request (PR) to deobligate funds at task closeout?

A: Yes. Written confirmation is required from the contractor stating all invoicing has been completed. The confirmation letter must be added as a supporting document in C.Request. To obtain confirmation letters from NOAALink core contractors, the task manager may email noaalink.invoice@noaa.gov for assistance. For non-core contractors, the task manager is responsible for obtaining the letter.

Template for IT System Assessment & Authorization Requirements

The NOAA Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) has developed a common approach for Assessment & Authorization (A&A) activities across all NOAA IT systems to improve consistency, quality, and overall performance of A&A. The NOAA Enterprise Security A&A (NESAA) solution will continue to incorporate Line Office IT Security Officer (ITSO) expertise and leverage lessons learned to iteratively advance A&A standards, processes, and procurement activities.

As a first step, the NOAALink Program Office (NPO) will use a standardized Performance Work Statement (PWS) template to ensure all A&A procurements include common requirements and high-quality deliverables compliant with NOAA's Risk Management Framework. If you have A&A requirements, use of the template is highly recommended because it helps you adhere to established NOAA standards. The PWS template can be accessed via the [Forms and Documents](#) page of the NOAALink website.

The guidance above was outlined in an August 15 memo to Assistant CIOs, OCIO Liaisons, Acquisition Management Advisory Committee (AMAC) members, and IT Security Officers. NPO will assist customers in completing the PWS template to address new and expiring contracts for A&A activities. We want to ensure your requirements are properly addressed, and we constantly look for ways to improve the tools we provide, so contact us at noaalink.help@noaa.gov or 301-628-5700 if you have any questions.

ON THE RADAR

Enterprise Initiatives

NOAALink Contract – NOAA has refreshed the Strategic Management Services (SMS) contractor pool by awarding a new SMS contract to The Ambit Group. Ambit will provide decision support, enterprise architecture, and project management services to help NOAA evolve and

implement its IT strategy. The contract is a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) with one base year and four option years. Next on the list, NOAA will recomplete the 8(a) pool and refresh the Small Business pool in the NOAALink Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract. Currently, NOAALink includes a pool of five 8(a) contractors, five small business contractors, and one SMS contractor. NOAA intends to post the 8(a) solicitation by the end of this calendar year, followed by the Small Business refresh in mid-FY 15 to enable new small business contractors to join the NOAALink program. These timelines are subject to change and any updates will be communicated on the NOAALink website.

Microsoft – For the past few years, many NOAA contracting officers have used a Microsoft Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) established by the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and made available to other Department of Commerce (DOC) bureaus. The BPA provides discounts on Microsoft software as well as software assurance and maintenance. With the current BPA set to expire on May 31, 2015, NOAALink has formed a Microsoft project team and will represent NOAA in follow-on BPA efforts underway by DOC/USPTO.

GUIDANCE YOU CAN USE

Required Documents and Approvals Table

Need to quickly reference the list of supporting documents and approvals you need for certain types of NOAALink actions? Bookmark the [Required Documents and Approvals Table](#) from the NOAALink website. The table distinguishes between service and product requirements, acquisitions over or under \$10 million, and contract modification categories.

	Required Documents and Reviews/Approvals by Acquisition Type						
	Service		Product		Modifications and Options		
	New Acquisition < \$10 million	New Acquisition > \$10 million	New Acquisition < \$10 million	New Acquisition > \$10 million	In-Scope Modification (including \$0)	Funding Modification	Exercise Option
Documents							
Submitted with PR							
NOAALink Worksheet	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Performance Work Statement (PWS) or Statement of Need	•	•	•	•	Description of Change*		Description of Change*
Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE)	•	•	•	•	•		
IT Security Checklist	•	•	•	•			
Section 508 Standards Checklist and Assessment Certification	•	•	•	•			
Justification for Other than Fair and Open Competition (JOFOC)	If requesting sole source		If requesting sole source				
Brand Name Justification			If requesting brand name product				
Vendor Letter Certifying Invoicing is Complete at Task Closeout						If requesting deobligation	
Developed with AGO							
Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP)	•	•					•
Milestone Plan	\$150k + Informal acquisition planning	Formal Acquisition Plan		•			
Acquisition Plan							
Market Research Checklist (completed in coordination with Contract Specialist)		•		•			
Review/Approvals							
CIO Council		•		•			
Program Management Council (PMC)		•		•			
Department of Commerce Investment Review Board (IRB)		•		•			
Acquisition Review Board (ARB)		Task Orders exempt					
Line or Staff Office Budget Office	•	•	•	•		•	•
NOAALink Program Office (NPO) - CRequest	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Submit approved PR as directed by NPO to regularly servicing acquisition office, field delegate with NOAALink procurement authority, or Acquisition and Grants Office (NLK)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

* Requestor should include a description of change(s) in the 'Purpose' field of C.Request or in a supporting document attached to the C.Request.

Period of Performance Extensions

If you plan to submit a purchase request (PR) extending a task order's period of performance (POP), you need to provide a signed justification for the extension. A balance of excess funds obligated to the task order is not a valid justification for extending the POP. The justification should also state what type of funding (e.g., one-year, two-year, or no year) will be used to pay for services performed during the extended POP. POP extensions are awarded at the discretion of the Contracting Officer (CO).

NOAALink IT Acquisition Procedures

Scope

You've likely heard the mantra many times: NOAALink is mandatory for all NOAA IT requirements, unless classified as a micro-purchase, PCs and accessories, or office equipment. What about requirements that fall in the 'gray area' between IT and other types of products and services?

Mission requirements containing a preponderance (50% or more) of IT are within scope of NOAALink, so the purchase request (PR) must include a NOAALink worksheet and be routed to the NOAALink Program Office (NPO) for approval.

MEET THE FACES BEHIND NOAALINK

This quarter, meet Claudia Mejia, Contracting Officer, and Virginia Chon, Contract Specialist. Both are members of the NOAALink team in the Acquisition and Grants Office.



Claudia is part of the acquisition management team. She recently joined NOAA from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) where

she served as an Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Procurement Unit Lead for four years. In collaboration with the NOAALink Program Office, Claudia closely assesses requirements and makes thoughtful recommendations that best serve customers' IT needs. Claudia is authorized by the government to publicize procurement opportunities, make contract awards, and modify contract terms or schedules. Prior to and throughout the acquisition process, Claudia provides valuable guidance to the NOAALink PO team and customers concerning unique acquisition needs. She assists customers with acquisition planning, assigns contract specialists to process acquisition packages, tracks the progress of purchase requests, monitors the program's 8(a) and small business utilization compliance, resolves contractor issues, and coordinates contract closeout functions.

Virginia recently joined NOAA from the Navy Wounded, Ill and Injured Program, Traumatic Brain Injury and Psychological Health Projects where she served as Contracts Analyst. Virginia works with customers to process their acquisition packages. She develops acquisition plans, determines appropriate contract types, publicizes solicitations, prepares negotiation plans and creates award recommendation materials for Contracting Officers, prepares contract documents, processes contract modifications, and assists with contract close-out activities. In partnership with customer technical representatives, Virginia develops appropriate evaluation factors, and evaluates bids.



If you are unsure other requirements apply to NOAALink, complete the NOAALink worksheet and PR and route to NPO for a scope decision. NPO will indicate this decision on your worksheet. If out of scope, you will then have documentation for the contract office in case the question of applicability comes up at that stage of the process.

To learn more about NOAALink's scope, review the [applicability guidance](#) on the NOAALink website.

NOAALink Core Contractor vs. Non-core Contractor

The NOAALink Contracting Officer (CO) maintains primary decision authority on the ability of a NOAALink Contractor to fulfill a particular requirement. Although NOAALink Contractors will have primary consideration, if it is deemed that a particular requirement cannot be successfully fulfilled by NOAALink Contractors, the CO will identify a suitable alternative.

To learn more, see the [NOAALink Service Areas](#) page on the NOAALink website.

Be Prepared for FY15 with NOAALink Training

The NOAALink Program Office will soon update its training program for FY15 and post the schedule on the [NOAALink website](#). Keep in mind that NOAALink is happy to accommodate group training requests for your office or one-on-one training. The NPO offers training covering:

- Pre-award process for those who will be involved in completing a NOAALink request submission
- Post-award process for those who will assume the Task Manager role of monitoring all technical aspects of the contract and assisting in contract administration
- Performance requirements and costs estimates for those who will be developing Performance Work Statement/Statement of Objectives and Independent Government Cost Estimates (IGCE) documents for service requirements
- Product requirements and cost estimates for those who will be developing Statement of Need and IGCE documents for commodity requirements.

RESOURCES

Visit our Website

Visit our website for the most up-to-date NOAALink information. FAQs, required documents, and training information are routinely updated for your reference. Access the site via <http://www.cio.noaa.gov/NOAALink/index.html>.

Email or Call us

If you are unable to find the information you require on our website, or if you need further guidance, please feel free to contact us at NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov or call us at 301-628-5700.

Join our Mailing List

To receive important updates on program requirements, required documents, and other guidance, please join our mailing list by sending an email to NOAALink.Help@noaa.gov.