

August 2019 (Vol. 8; Issue 8)

## 8 Things You Can Do To Be Ready

- 1. Stay Alert: Monitor FedBizOps and GSA's Alliant 2 / Alliant 2 SB Interact site, as any news will appear there first**
- 2. Make Friends: Look for larger-scale task orders on vehicles like STARS II and VETS 2 to bring to holders of those contracts if you do not have them**
- 3. Be Prepared: Drive business to "Plan B" contracts now and then pivot back to Alliant 2 SB if you win it**
- 4. Get Your House in Order: Make sure all certifications, system approvals, and CPARs are up to date and properly documented**
- 5. Go Back to Start: Get ready for the possibility that, despite the recent draft amendment, GSA reopens the process entirely**
- 6. Maximize Your Score: Scorecards are not going away and typically share common elements across multiple competitions**
- 7. Invest Wisely: Accounting, estimating, and purchasing systems, and certifications (e.g., ISO and CMMI) are permanent fixtures of scorecards**
- 8. Perform: Past performance will always be king – keep those CPARs scores high**

## Dog Days of Alliant 2 SB

- 🐾 Alliant 2 SB represents GSA's first lost protest on a scorecard-based procurement, but this does not invalidate the scorecard approach
- 🐾 In the absence of Alliant 2 SB, however, work has been shifting to 8(a) STARS II, VETS 2 GWAC, and GSA Schedule 70
- 🐾 GSA recently released a draft amendment allowing previous Alliant 2 SB offerors to update their proposals
- 🐾 It is unclear how GSA will handle companies now exceeding the SB size standard, given that 3 years have passed since original submission
- 🐾 If GSA decides to restart the process altogether, it is unlikely that scoring will change, but the competitive landscape certainly has
- 🐾 Even when new awards are eventually announced, a new wave of protests is likely, further delaying and diminishing Alliant 2 SB

### What Went Wrong with A2SB

August not only brings the dog days of summer, but also dog days of GSA's Alliant 2 Small Business (A2SB) program. In March, GSA announced awards on the A2SB contract. A follow-on to the wildly successful Alliant SB contract, A2SB filled a niche within GSA's GWAC portfolio for larger-scale IT solutions that could be met by small businesses. Predictably, a wave of protests ensued. GSA weathered the storm through the Agency and GAO stages but suffered a loss at the Court of Federal Claims (CoFC). The CoFC found that the GSA Contracting Officer had improperly validated the required approved cost accounting system for some offerors and had inconsistently reviewed pricing, calling the "fair and reasonable" assessment into question. GSA had to rescind the awards and re-evaluate.

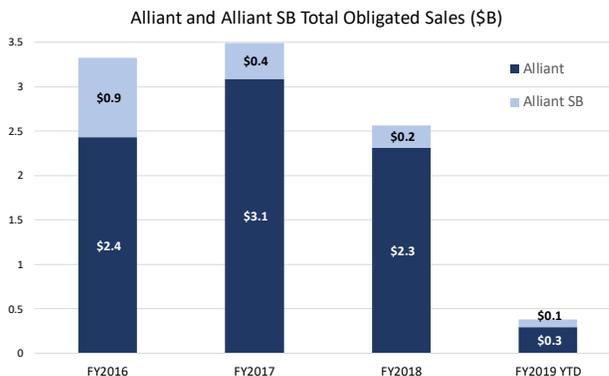
### What is the Impact

The delayed A2SB award leaves a large hole in GSA's GWAC portfolio. Alliant 2 remains for large, complex IT solutions. 8(a) STARS II and VETS 2 provide access to socio-economically disadvantaged businesses. Without A2SB, however, GSA lacks a good solution for IT procurements beyond the capabilities of 8(a) or SDVOSB, but appropriate for SB. With ~\$8.7B in sales from the predecessor Alliant SB contract reasonably expected to shift onto A2SB, the stakes are high. With the delay, work is shifting to STARS II, VETS 2, GSA Schedule 70 or the non-GSA CIO-SP3 SB vehicle. It is also important to note that the CoFC did not invalidate the "highest technically rated with acceptable pricing" or "scorecard" approaches, but took issue with the scoring execution on A2SB. This implies that scorecard approaches, pioneered by OASIS, will remain for the foreseeable future.

### What Happens Next (Most Likely)

On August 19, GSA released a draft amendment to the RFP allowing offerors to update their proposals as well as an RFI. Time to review comments, formalize the amendment, and receive and evaluate updated proposals will delay awards by months. Given the public scrutiny, there will also likely be a greater level of internal review before announcements. If you won originally, prepare for award. Identify opportunities, prepare your

marketing materials, train your staff on A2SB's value proposition for influencing customers to use the vehicle. If you are no longer "small," be careful about resubmitting, as you do not want to recertify your size status. If you did not bid originally, there is currently no path to bidding this time, so continue to identify probable winners as teammates.



Source: GSA GWAC Dashboard Obligated Sales Data; Total Obligated Sales by FY Award Date

### What Happens Next (Plan B)

The amendment GSA released is a draft and requested input. It is possible, although less likely, that GSA could call for new proposals. 2016 submissions will be 3+ years old by the time new awards are made. In the SB arena, many of the original companies will no longer be "small." While GSA can award based on size at submission, expect increased scrutiny and public outcry from affected parties. Similarly, many companies who did not bid or fell short of the minimum score last time could clear the original hurdle for an award 3 years later. These uncertainties might inspire GSA to restart the entire process. If you did not bid, prepare now. Given the prevalence of scorecards, time spent maximizing scores will not be wasted. Also, if you are hoping to buy your way into an A2SB award, note that many have tried and none have succeeded in purchasing Alliant 2 contracts.