

Getting Smart with Geospatial

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GIF 2010 Volume: 8 Issue: 1 (February)



NEW GSA PROGRAM ENABLES GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO PURCHASE GEOSPATIAL SOFTWARE AND SERVICES AT SUBSTANTIAL DISCOUNTS.

Federal and other government agencies will be able to purchase geospatial software and services at substantial discounts under new SmartBuy blanket purchase agreements announced recently by the General Services Administration (GSA).

SmartBuy is a federal procurement program that promotes effective software management. The Smart-Buy awards are co-branded with the Department of Defense Enterprise Software Initiative program.

The new suite of geospatial software solutions provides computeraided design, Web-based visualization, imagery analysis, geocoding, national and international road networks, and geospatial analytics and modeling.

The SmartBuy program made the awards in collaboration with the Department of Interior. By leveraging the government's immense buying power, SmartBuy can potentially save taxpayers millions of dollars via reduced prices and more favorable terms and conditions.

Geospatial blanket purchase agreement prices are discounted by up to 40 percent from the prices previously awarded on GSA schedule contracts, according to Lawrence Hale, director of the Office of Infrastructure Optimization in the GSA Federal Acquisition Service's Office of Integrated Technology Solutions. The estimated contract value will be about \$20 million.

The new geospatial program is just one part of SmartBuy, which stands for "software managed and acquired on the right terms," Hale explained.

"We work with groups of customers, such as the geospatial line of business, who have requirements in specific areas for specific kinds of software," Hale said. "There is an advantage for agencies to get together to collect those requirements and use GSA to negotiate a better deal. We want to focus the buy so that we get the right set of tools that meet customer requirements at the right price."

The lines of business are government managed groups across different agencies that use similar products. GSA does a SmartBuy when a group such as the geospatial line of business comes forward and says that it and other agencies have a set of requirements and need commercial tools to do certain things.

Although the commercial tools are already available through GSA, Hale noted, "It's an opportunity for us to take the broad field of software tools that are on the GSA schedule, take the specific requirements of this group of customers, and turn that into a focused acquisition, the SmartBuy agreement.

"They could already buy this at retail. But the whole purpose of GSA is to work with agencies to aggregate the buying power

of the federal government, and to use that buying power to save the taxpayers money and get the right tools," Hale added.

The geospatial line of business comprises 32 federal agencies that are geospatially focused, said Lou Sanford, senior geospatial program manager for the geospatial line of business for the U.S. Geological Survey, and a member of the Federal Geographic Data Committee. The group includes the departments of defense, justice and homeland security, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and a wide range of other offices.

The group surveyed members and found that they wanted "to combine our resources to develop a set of common, sharable requirements for geospatial software," Sanford said. "We developed a set of business requirements to address that wide group of agency needs, and when we got to a certain point in the process, we sat down with the SmartBuy program."

The new program offers a menu of different service offerings, Sanford noted. "So agencies can mix and match what they might need, based on software that they might currently be running, or incorporate new technology to solve a particular business mission.

"The vendors have provided a valuable service to the wider community. We give them a big playing field to offer their products. The benefit to federal agencies is that we start to use more common services, which makes it easier for us to share data," Sanford said.

SMARTBUY GEOSPATIAL PRODUCTS

The GSA SmartBuy geospatial awards were made to Onix Networking Corporation for Google and CubeWerx software, Imager Software Corp. for ISC MapDotNet software, Planet Associates for Planet Infrastructure Relationship Management (IRM) software, and Science Applications International Corporation for SAIC GeoRover software.

Following are brief descriptions of the available products.

► Google Earth Enterprise: Helps organizations with imagery and other geospatial data make that information accessible and useful to all employees who need access via an intuitive, fast application; visualize, explore and understand information on a fully interactive 3-D globe or 2-D browser based maps; and enable workers to collaborate, improve decision-making, and take faster, more informed action based on geospatial information.

► CubeWerx: Standards-based off the shelf software products in response to spatial data infrastructure requirements for interoperable information infrastructures.

► MapDotNet: Interactive mapping solutions that enable users of MapDotNet UX to: create mash-ups, custom maps, spatial data in a variety of formats, and .NET applications; visualize, viewing spatial data across a 2-D road map, aerial photography, or rendered in 3-D; analyze, calculating distance and area across map points, querying maps for specific information and creating thematic maps to communicate data distributions; and interact, with easy to navigate, fast-loading maps and support for WPF and Silverlight.

► Planet IRM: Designed to consolidate critical infrastructure information and streamline IT operations through a single, centralized, visual data repository, which improves operational efficiency and service levels, reduces network disruptions and downtime, and provides the cohesion necessary for accurate and thorough critical system analysis.

► GeoRover: Geospatial software products that are designed and sold as extensions or "plugins" to the ArcMap component of ESRI ArcGIS Desktop GIS software. GeoRover software tools specialize in data import, field data collection/visualization, data creation/editing, data export, and raster product format display/management.

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