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GOVERNMENT IT REPORT

Feds Hankering for Mobile IT Management Solutions

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E-Commerce Times
10/09/13 5:00 AM PT

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The mobility component of IT touches almost every other segment related to electronic systems. An accurate measure of the federal market for mobile management solutions is thus hard to assess. "What is not difficult to quantify is the speed at which technology is moving and pushing federal agencies to innovate and modernize," said Annette Rippert, managing director of Accenture Federal Services.

Mobile IT Management Emerging as Growth Opportunity in Federal Market The acquisition process for the latest innovation must keep pace with the ever changing IT landscape. In the public sector, that process has surfaced in acquisition vehicles related to cloud technology, data management and IT security.

For the U.S. government, the General Services Administration has become a focal point for developing contract vehicles and programs to facilitate the acquisition of innovative IT. GSA's main function is to act on behalf of federal agencies -- or to provide guidance to those agencies -- in the acquisition of supplies and services.

GSA has rolled out yet another specialized acquisition capability for IT -- this time for mobile device utilization. Mobile devices aren't exactly new, but increasing demand for their use in federal agencies has generated a need for appropriate contracting platforms.

"With the near-universal adoption of smart mobile technology across the federal workforce, GSA's role as America's buyer for the mobile work environment is more important than ever," said GSA Acting Administrator Dan Tangherlini.

In May, GSA launched its Government Wide Mobile Device Management Program, an initiative designed to streamline the procurement process for agencies to access mobile device management (MDM), mobile application management (MAP), and mobile lifecycle management (MLM) solutions.

"GSA's Managed Mobility program gives agencies the tools they need to buy once and buy well, saving taxpayer dollars and keeping pace with leading-edge mobile technologies," Tangherlini said.

Builds on Existing Contracts

Unlike many of GSA's approaches to IT procurement, in which the agency has set up specific contract vehicles for a particular type of IT, such as Information as a Service and cloud platforms, the mobile device management program leans on existing GSA contract vehicles. Through a Request for Technical Capabilities, GSA invited vendors who already were qualified by the agency for a broad range of IT competencies to be selected for designation by GSA for their expertise in mobile device management.

"Rather than generate a new contract, we assessed responses to our RFTC, identified potential sources of supply, and mapped the ability to procure these potential sources to existing government-wide vehicles," Dave Peters, a GSA mobility program manager, told the E-Commerce Times.

The plan conforms to a federal executive order that urges agencies not to create new acquisition vehicles if they are able to procure resources through existing contract vehicles.

"Managed mobility is not a government-wide contract vehicle," said Mary Davie, assistant commissioner in the Office of Integrated Technology Services at GSA.

The initiative is a cross-governmental program developed in response to the Obama administration's Digital Government Strategy, she said.

Launched in May 2012, it is designed to meet citizen needs to access high-quality digital government information at any time on any device. In addition, the policy encourages increased use of mobility options in the federal workforce.

"Our program is designed to identify common requirements in our RFTC that government agencies face in order to manage mobile resources. We

offer evaluation templates, general pricing discussions, and other resources, and we link to potential sources of supply on existing government contracts," Davie noted.

The fundamental objective of the Managed Mobility program is to develop a core capability for effectively scaling the secure deployment and management of mobile applications, enterprise data on mobile devices, and management of the devices and mobile platforms themselves, according to GSA.

GSA Selects Vendor Groups

So far, GSA has designated nine companies in two groups for participation in the program. Companies in the first group were selected for demonstrating an understanding of the government's functional mobile device and application management requirements. The vendors in this group are Afaria (SAP), Airwatch, Good Technology, and Fiberlink with its MaaS360 offering.

The second group consists of IT integrators with significant mobile device facilitation capabilities. The companies in this group are Accenture, AT&T, CACI, CSI and HP. Each participant is complemented by a group of partners and resellers, thus expanding the vendor pool. Virtually all selected participants are qualified on GSA's IT schedule 70 roster, and many are qualified under the agency's Alliant, Stars II and Government Wide Acquisition Contract vehicles.

The GSA program appears to fill a need. Since the program was launched in May, it has registered 9,000 page views to the mobile management site, GSA reported, and more than 100 attendees signed up for a webinar on the program.

"To date, we are aware of several Requests for Proposal that have either used our materials or specifically mentioned the GSA program. We continue to work with many agencies procuring MDM for both traditional enterprise and BYOD (bring your own device) scenarios," Peters said. Several federal agencies have used the GSA mobile criteria, and then employed the standing GSA Schedule 70 to purchase managed mobility components.

A Market Window Opens

For vendors, the program appears to show some commercial promise.

"We have experienced increased interest in the federal market around mobility management and agencies considering how MDM fits into their overall mobile or digital strategy. Our clients want to understand more about the GSA contract providers and solutions, as well as understand more broadly about what other agencies and industries are doing to secure their mobile workforces," Annette Rippert, managing director of Accenture Federal Services, told the E-Commerce Times.

"For us, taking the time to understand an agency's need in managed mobility extends beyond the selection of a solution to include mobile governance, policy development, security considerations and mobile application lifecycle management. Those conversations have led to additional business for Accenture," she added.

"We have been contacted by five agencies over the GSA announcement," Larry Littleton, director of mobility solutions at CACI International, told the E-Commerce Times. "In addition to mobility enterprise, all of these agencies are requesting additional services from CACI, including app vetting, mobile security and smartphone biometrics, to name a few."

The mobility component of IT touches almost every other segment related to electronic systems -- and as a result, an accurate measure of the federal market for MDM and MAP is hard to assess.

"Mobility is a broad IT enabler for government organizations, and it is embedded into many programs, such as cyber, enterprise IT and wireless. Then there's classified versus unclassified budgets. We are not aware of a precise method for determining the federal mobility market at this time," Littleton said.

"We have found it difficult to put a dollar amount on potential enterprise mobility management services, given the broad scope and varying agency needs. What is not difficult to quantify is the speed at which technology is moving and pushing federal agencies to innovate and modernize," said Accenture's Rippert.

"The digital age of bringing together social, mobile, cloud and analytics is here," she observed. "Agencies faced with the need to push forward now have a set of secure managed mobility solutions that can help them gain control over their environment." **ECT**

John K. Higgins is a career business writer, with broad experience for a major publisher in a wide range of topics including energy, finance, environment and government policy. In his current freelance role, he reports mainly on government information technology issues for ECT News Network.

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