EITaaS Base Infrastructure Modernization (BIM)

Acquisition recommendations primer

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Introduction

This paper represents a primer for a series of Department of Air Force (DAF) Enterprise IT as a Service (EITaaS) Base Infrastructure Modernization (BIM) procurement topics with recommendations presented by Lumen. Subsequent papers will further explore each topic area in detail with analogous examples and recommendations.

The DAF is evolving its Digital Modernization Strategy moving to an "as a Service" model integrating network, end-user services and computing platforms through a series of procurements anticipated to be awarded FY2022 through FY2024.

Many lessons have been learned from the EITaaS Network as a Service (NaaS) Risk Reduction Effort (RRE). The DAF continues to refine its approach to meet its objectives to modernize, consolidate and look for improved IT operations while reducing overall costs. As the DAF moves forward with its EITaaS procurements, Lumen, as a global service secure infrastructure supplier, provides thought leadership and recommendations for DAF decisionmakers with the goals to achieve improved performance, reduced costs, and smooth transition while ensuring the BIM program executes successfully. Our objective as an "as a Service" network solutions industry leader is to clarify topic areas which may not have been fully identified during the RRE or discussed at Industry Day.

Contractor Owned/ Contractor Operated (COCO) vs. Government Owned/ Contractor Operated (GOCO)

At Industry Day, the Government briefed a preferred approach for BIM using a GOCO model for physical base support and a COCO model for contractor common approach, such as network operations support. Our experience shows the GOCO approach for the base area network (BAN) may not fully provide the positive benefits the DAF is seeking.

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The BIM contract can benefit from one unified approach which industry has used for over 25 years. The COCO model places the total cost allocation on the qualified vendors who understand service contracts and how to operate within this environment. The benefits of a COCO model to the DAF are extensive from a total cost of managing BIM throughout the full lifecycle. COCO eliminates capital expenses shifting to an operations and maintenance model. This model reduces programmatic complexity and colors of money issues while establishing more consistent contract cost certainty for budgeting purposes. A major Government concern is equipment ownership and modernization. Clearly defined transition out language transferring equipment and requisite documentation back to the Government ownership at nominal cost or no cost to the Government can alleviate this concern. A COCO model would be satisfactory to industry partners because the burden of modernization would rest with the vendor and equipment cost recovery would be amortized over the period of performance of the awarded task order. With clearly defined statements of objectives and incentivized service level agreements, a COCO model approach has proven to be highly successful for Federal agencies and commercial companies. COCO can be structured and procured in a flexible, adaptive manner to the benefit of the DAF. A hybrid of Firm Fixed and Cost Plus is possible under a COCO model. For instance, Cost Plus makes sense for upfront design and site survey and remediation work unanticipated during implementation. Firmed Fixed for implementation and sustainment under COCO makes sense as risk and performance become the responsibility of the service provider. Additionally, an incentive award fee structure makes logical sense to drive vendor innovation and meet performance objectives over the life of the task order.

An analysis of the total cost of ownership, which will be discussed in the next paper, shows the COCO model approach can save the DAF precious budgetary dollars while providing the additional benefit of a simplified staffing plan and support model up to and including the program office. Reconsidering the COCO model approach for the BAN by addressing lessons learned with industry partners may clarify Government concerns and program risks while meeting the original intent of the EITaaS program as a fully managed “as a Service” model.

Whichever model the Government ultimately chooses for the BIM procurement, it is imperative the Government establish a minimum mandatory design architecture for vendors to reference. Under an IDIQ construct, consistency in core design and configuration control can be lost with multiple task order awardees, and the Government should retain design authority even under a COCO model.

Base tenant inclusion within BIM contract scope

BIM, in its support of base-level services, should consider, wherever possible access to all tenants maximizing penetration into the base’s entire geographic footprint. By doing so, the DAF can achieve economies of scale significantly improving implementation efficiencies and cost reductions avoiding a piecemeal and costly modernization and sustainment of the installation at large. This was an area not fully addressed during the RRE due to the limited funding for the experiment but should be considered for the BIM contract.

The scope of BIM services touches many areas beyond the host tenant, such as base wide infrastructure including ISP/OSP and wireless services. Access to the BIM contract should be made available to all tenants to maximize service coverage and increase physical security by simplifying the on base vendor pool. Expanding the current scope of BIM would serve the entire community of interest for official business, which could expand to unofficial business services, such as housing and support services. Further, if the full tenant universe is generally characterized including rough order of magnitude (ROM) estimates of current and future requirements – demand – a COCO investment can be made that captures the full potential range of engagement across the tenant environment. This will result in a better business case, a better operating case and lower overall cost to implement for vendors

BIM scope

At Industry Day, the Government presented high level requirements in scope and out of scope of BIM. Our concern is two-fold: (1) scope of the BIM program requirements may be limited and not fully reflective of current and future capabilities available immediately or within the base period of the 10-year period of performance, and (2) lack of clarity across technical requirements as well as the supporting concepts of operations across these services.

As one example, with interoperability of wireless services across the enterprise, excluding voice connectivity, to include cloud-based telephony systems, from the total BIM scope may likely drive costs up and increase complexity unnecessarily over the period of performance and beyond. Capturing the full scope of BAN requirements regardless of the timing of expiring contracts and including these capabilities within the BIM contract gives the major command customers flexibility to meet their needs while keeping the contract fresh, relevant, and vibrant over the period of performance.

BIM scope includes micro segmentation and bandwidth on demand requirements for the BAN; however, not within scope of BIM are software defined networking orchestration or software defined WAN (SD-WAN) as briefed at Industry Day. Your industry partners certainly need clarity around these requirements with an understanding what the Government's expectations are for micro segmentation and bandwidth on demand at the BAN-level and the concept of operations how the Government plans to meet its out-of-scope requirements, such as software defined networking orchestration and SD-WAN. If the intent in scope terms is to retain a focus on BIM, then it is important to avoid conflating Wide Area Networking (WAN) with the SD-WAN technology. Additionally, isolating or eliminating from scope functional capabilities such as voice, which are incidental to most BIM capabilities, could lower future costs if retained in scope but not implemented in solutions.

Transition

Having this level of detail prior to task order release provides clear understanding, strengthens task order response minimizing potential gaps and schedule delays.

An area not identified during the RRE is the benefit of having a master program schedule providing details of contracts being incorporated into BIM as well as schedules which may impact the BIM program rollout and execution. As a global program supporting 185+ DAF installations, without this type of detail prior to task order release, DAF and industry partners will not fully understand competing requirements or critical dependencies of other in-flight DAF contractual priorities. Having this level of detail prior to task order release provides clear understanding, strengthens task order response minimizing potential gaps and schedule delays. Minimizing risk under a hybrid contract type should be a critical determinant for the DAF and should reduce engineering change proposals, a real but unanticipated cost driver, after task order award. The timing and pragmatic grouping of each task order considering all planned and in-flight projects should be viewed as key to a successful approach. By having a full understanding of existing contract timing (expiration, in-flight) at the base level provides better visibility tightening budget / schedule impact while optimizing decision points for areas such as task order timing and development.

Conclusion

The DAF is evolving with its EITaaS program objectives to modernize, consolidate and look for improved IT operations while reducing overall costs. Clear and decisive progress has been made through the RRE. Lumen, as an industry leader in network services and partner with the DAF across its enterprise and BIM today, is encouraged with this progress and offers observations and perspective during the pre-final solicitation phase of the BIM acquisition. Our objective is the DAF consider recommendations from its industry partners to help strengthen its approaches ensuring successful contracting for BIM. Future papers will provide recommendations on how to strengthen the overall BIM program controlling and reducing costs, addressing quality concerns, and raising the overall probability of meeting and exceeding DAF program objectives.

Learn more about Lumen's EITaaS BIM capabilities at lumen.com/public-sector.

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