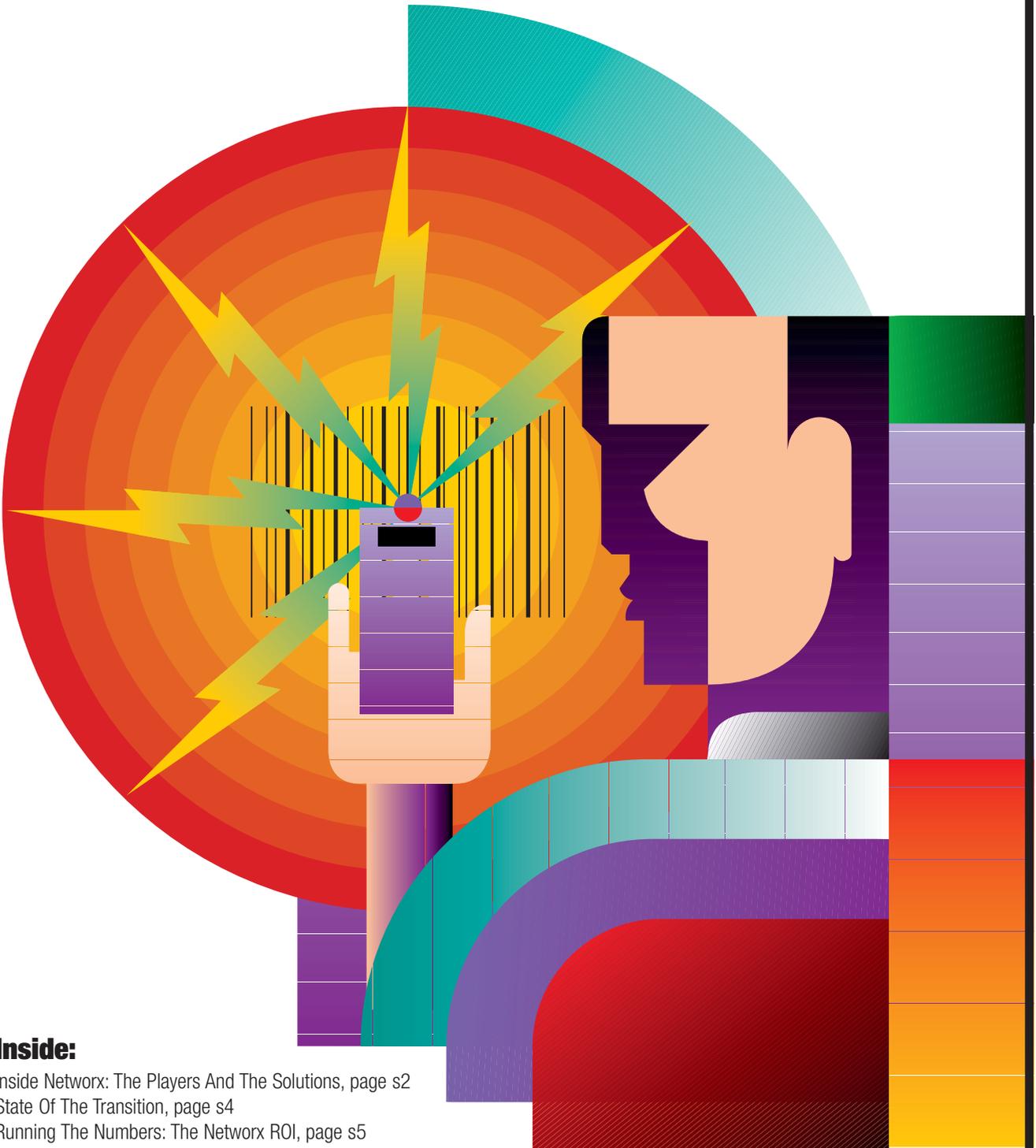


# ACCELERATING THE NETWORK TRANSITION



**Inside:**

Inside Network: The Players And The Solutions, page s2  
State Of The Transition, page s4  
Running The Numbers: The Networkx ROI, page s5

# Inside Networkx: The Players and the Solutions

Three years ago, the General Services Administration (GSA) unveiled its massive \$68.2 billion Networkx contract, promoting it as a more robust, technology-rich and cost-effective successor to FTS2001. While the value of Networkx and the federal government's commitment to it remain unchanged today, federal agencies are still struggling to make the move to the new contracting vehicle.

"I think the Networkx contract offers cost savings on many of the services that are provided versus the FTS2001 pricing," Kevin Plexico, senior vice president for research and analysis at INPUT told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. "Probably the key selling feature of the contract was less expense for basically the same services. It also offers some new services that weren't provided under the FTS contract that were designed to move agencies to a more modern telecom infrastructure."

So what exactly is Networkx and why is it so important to the federal government? In short, it's the largest federal telecommunications acquisition ever competed and its mission is to meet the federal government's full range of worldwide telecommunications and networking requirements over the next decade. GSA says that Networkx's application-oriented architecture will support the federal communications infrastructure underlying key government operations, providing a "seamless, secure and interoperable federal telecommunications environment".

The Networkx contract is divided into two parts, Networkx Universal and Networkx Enterprise, to give agencies a more comprehensive selection of telecommunications and IT services to meet their own unique mission-critical needs. "One was to allow the market players to process vehicles that provide a much more comprehensive approach to networks modernization," Rishi Sood, vice president of Gartner, said in an interview with 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. "The other was to allow smaller players into the marketplace."

Networkx Universal, which was awarded to AT&T Government Solutions, Verizon Business, and Qwest Government Services Inc., provides all the national and international telecommunications services available under the FTS2001 contract. It also provides IP-based, wireless, satellite, security services and a set of optional features such as Ethernet, IP video transport, collaboration support, land mobile radio, mobile satellite, and cellular digital packet data.

Awarded in March 2007, the Universal contract is worth a maximum of \$48.1 billion. Each contract has a four-year base with three two-year options and each of the three provider companies has been guaranteed minimum revenue of \$525 million.

Networkx Enterprise, awarded in May 2007 to the three Universal contract holders plus Level 3 Communications and Sprint, is valued at \$20.1 billion and was intended to focus more on national IP-centric services. The Enterprise contract requires companies to offer a minimum of nine IP-related services, such as voice over IP (VOIP) and network-based virtual private networks (VPNs).

"The default strategic approach was to allow agencies to either move wholesale into a network modernization action or pick the one, two or three major areas they wanted to specialize in," Sood said. "Clearly there's a number of auxiliary concerns that come through the process, which made Enterprise a compelling alternative."

While in theory, the two contracts were designed to address different needs, in practice agencies appear to be using the vehicles interchangeably. "The Universal and Enterprise are really more alike than they are different," Plexico said. "I'll be quite honest with you, it's really very hard to tell the difference. They cover, for the most part, the same set of services and there's a tremendous amount of overlap among the two services."

## OMB Steps In

Networkx may seem on the surface to be just another comprehensive government telecommunications contract, but a closer look reveals some unique attributes. For one thing, this is the first time the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has required agencies to adopt a specific telecom contract.

One reason for OMB's mandate is Networkx's ability to help agencies update their telecommunications and IT systems, particularly with regard to implementing the Trusted Internet Connections (TIC) initiative. TIC requires agencies to optimize individual external connections, including Internet points of presence currently in use by the federal government. Reducing the number of external connections will improve the federal government's incident response capability.

It also will save money. In the wake of a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of the Networkx contract by the Federal CIO

*Continued on page s6*

WHAT'S *the* BUSINESS PROBLEM?

PRODUCTIVE



PRODUCTIVITY FALLING OFF

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Government Services



Qwest proudly services the following federal contracts: Network Universal, Network Enterprise, FTS2001 Crossover, WITS2001 Crossover, multiple regional local service, GSA Schedule 70.

# State Of The Transition

So with all of the advantages and benefits the Networx contract provides to federal agencies, why are they still struggling to make the transition? As Karl Krumbholz, deputy assistant commissioner of network services at GSA and Sanjeev “Sonny” Bhagowalia, CIO, Department of the Interior told an Association for Federal Information Resources Management (AFFIRM) panel last November, “transition is difficult and complex”.

In their presentation, Krumbholz and Bhagowalia pointed out that the Networx transition has been delayed by the overall growth and increased complexity of network services, the need for statements of work (SOWs), and the ability for industry to protest task orders. Other factors include higher agency priorities, turnover within agencies, the lack of technical resources and the burden of SOWs on vendors.

“There’s literally thousands of connections to FTS2001 and they’re all operated in a very decentralized manner for many agencies,” INPUT’s Kevin Plexico told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. “So it’s very difficult – particularly for a larger agency – to orchestrate the resources and changes that are necessary across the organization to move them to the Networx contract.”

There is also an overhead cost associated with making sure that an entire agency is on the same page and transitioning in a cohesive manner. “I think that’s where the challenge came in and the complexity many agencies face in moving over,” he said.

## Pressing Deadlines

But despite the complexity of the task of transitioning to Networx, one thing is certain: agencies will have to find a way to get it done. After all, the last FTS2001 bridge contract will expire on June 30, 2011.

“It’s absolutely mandatory that we get it done on schedule; it’s an unacceptable alternative not to get it done,” Krumbholz said in an interview with Washington Technology last December. “The phones will only not go dead as long as we maintain a contract. Without it, we can’t even pay bills, and I don’t think carriers are going to just provide free service.”

Whether or not there are alternatives to transitioning to Networx - contractual or otherwise - is not a thought GSA and Krumbholz are entertaining at the present time. “Look at the challenges we’ve had,” he said. “These are difficult things we’ve been working on, but nevertheless, that’s the bottom line. We’ve got to get it done. It’s hard, we know, but it’s one of those things. All transitions are difficult.”

Since GSA extended the original September 30, 2008

filing deadline to August 31, 2010, where exactly does the transition stand now? As of Feb. 28, 2010, GSA’s numbers are as follows: of the 136 SOW orders required to be submitted to GSA by the new deadline, 39 percent are awarded, 31 percent are in progress, and 30 percent are expected. Of the 376 Fair Opportunity (FO) Decisions required to select a vendor, 54 percent are awarded and 46 percent are expected.

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Kevin Plexico, senior vice president for research and analysis, INPUT

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Of the 5,089,059 services that first must be disconnected from the FTS2001 contract before connecting to Networx, 41.9 percent have been disconnected, leaving 58.1 percent of services still to be disconnected from the FTS2001 contract. Those percentages are far from uniform among the various federal agencies, the GSA data revealed. Leading the pack with the highest percentage of completed disconnections is the Department of Energy (84 percent), followed closely by the Department of Transportation (77 percent) and the Social Security Administration (72 percent).

Based on those numbers, the agencies with the lowest percentage of completed FTS2001 disconnections include USDA (5 percent), HHS (6 percent) and Judiciary (11 percent). One thing is certain: continued pressure from GSA and from Congress over the transition will drive senior leadership within agencies to turn up the heat on the operations personnel.

“That’s probably going to have agencies moving as fast as anything,” Plexico said. “Given that they don’t necessarily have a lot of additional money to make the transition, political pressure and pressure from their leadership is obviously the key to getting people over the hump.” ▼

# Running The Numbers: The Networx ROI

If you're the federal government, you don't award the largest telecommunications contract in history without first being certain that agencies can save money and boost the functionality of their operations with more advanced products and services. But when it comes to quantifying the return on investment (ROI), ferreting out those numbers is easier said than done.

"It is clear because of the budget battles that IT cost optimization and alternative delivery models – which is another term for Cloud – are really the two most pressing issues facing federal decision makers moving forward," Rishi Sood, vice president, Gartner told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. "I think Networx modernization allows you to go down the tactical roadmap of IT cost optimization, as well as build a strategic framework for IT cost optimization. When we're talking about the effectiveness of their IT operations and cost savings within their operations, the Networx transition can certainly help with that."

As a result, the modernization of the federal telecom network is fast becoming a vital component to driving some of the cost savings that are necessary to run government operations moving forward. "I think the Networx modernization inspired how we get to more cost-effective technology service delivery across government," Sood said.

The goal of Networx is to provide federal agencies with comprehensive, best value telecommunications – including new technologies – that will lay the foundation for a more efficient and effective government. The overall objective is to enable agencies to focus their resources on building seamless, secure operating environments while ensuring access to the best technology industry has to offer.

Specifically, Networx provides continuity for all current services to all locations that are on the FTS2001 and Crossover contracts and prices that overall are lower than the current FTS2001 rates. It includes a broad menu of services and offers the flexibility to expand those services throughout the life of the contracts. Agencies have access to a wide range of service providers, including the major telecom firms, operations and transition support, and quality of service and Service Level Agreements sufficient to meet each agency's needs.

"Government is getting an extraordinarily good deal on Networx – even better than on FTS 2001," said Warren

Suss, president, Suss Consulting Inc. "I think the real story here is how much government could save if agencies weren't so behind in transitioning to Networx."

While all agencies should expect efficiencies after transitioning to Networx, the hard numbers are not likely to be uniform across departments. Actual numbers will vary depending upon which services agencies choose and how effective they are at cutting deals with the contractors. The pricing and savings could differ from agency-to-agency because although Networx vendors are not permitted to charge more than the Networx pricing, they can and do offer deals below that mark.

According to Karl Krumbholz, deputy assistant commissioner of network services at GSA, agencies can save anywhere from 10-40 percent off their current telecommunications costs under the existing contract vehicle, FTS2001. "The prices on Networx are all preset; the offerers were required to bid prices out to the end, so the prices are not going to vary," Krumbholz told Washington Technology. "Now, they could vary if an agency put out a statement of work and rebid. Then prices could be competed again."

With savings like that, delays can be costly. Krumbholz has estimated that taxpayers are coughing up \$18 million a month because agencies have not yet transitioned to Networx. This is not the first time that delays have cost dollars. During the previous transition to FTS2001, delays in transitioning to the new contract increased the cost of telecommunications and resulted in the loss of \$74 million in savings that the federal government could have realized.

## Carrot or Stick?

With numbers that big, someone is bound to notice. Enter the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which recently sent a letter to several key departments, chiding them for dragging their feet in implementing the telecommunications program.

Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman, (I-CT) and Ranking Member Susan Collins (R-ME) demanded that the secretaries of Homeland Security, Defense, Labor, Justice, Health and Human Services, Commerce, and Agriculture update the panel on what steps their departments are taking to speed up the transition to Networx.

"As potentially the largest telecommunications services

transition ever undertaken by the federal government, this transition has experienced significant challenges,” the letter said. “We understand that GSA has been working with agencies to address those challenges; however, the cost savings projected by this transition have not been realized as some agencies have been slow to take appropriate steps to ensure a smooth transition.”

Now the Senate subcommittee wants to know why, and gave the major departments a deadline of April 9 to spell out their Networx transition plans to the committee and specify any challenges that have slowed them down. “We believe that agencies should be taking advantage of the newest technologies provided by Networx instead of solely using the same or similar services from their existing contracts,” the letter said. “[T]his of particular concern given the security of federal networks and the opportunities to use new technologies to assist agencies in strengthening their cyber defenses.”

The U.S. Senate is not alone in wanting answers about the Networx transition. Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY) scheduled a hearing on the delays for April 29. Witnesses

scheduled for the hearing were: GSA Administrator Martha Johnson, Sanjeev Bhagowalia, Department of the Interior’s CIO and chairman, Interagency Management Council, as well as representatives from the five Networx contractors: AT&T Government Solutions, Qwest Government Services, Level 3 Federal, Verizon Federal, Inc. and Sprint Nextel Corp.

Because there is a top-down mandate to transition to Networx and time is running out on the clock, agencies are under the gun to get the job done quickly. And the best way to execute efficiently at this point is to break down the savings each agency can realize. “There needs to be a cost benefit analysis – cost containment calculator if you will – over how Networx transition really saves agencies money operationally,” Gartner’s Sood said.

This cost containment calculator also should highlight the benefits that can be realized by building a better technology infrastructure to support challenges such as cybersecurity and compliance. “I think it really is a two-sided coin of what is the cost-savings attached to Networx modernization, and then what are the security and operational benefits attached to it as well,” Sood said. ▼

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*Continued from “Inside Networx”, page s2*

Council, OMB in August 2008 issued a memo to government agencies mandating the use of the contract. “Based on the findings of the analysis, agencies shall use the General Service Administration (GSA) Networx contract to satisfy requirements currently being met via the FTS2001 contract,” OMB’s memo said.

“The data says they’ll save money if they move,” Plexico noted. “While the savings to any particular agency might not be that much to that particular agency, when you look across all the government agencies, there’s a lot of money that could be saved on a monthly basis. Given the budget environment that we’re in, the government doesn’t want to be perceived as wasting money that it could be otherwise saving because it’s perceived as lazy.”

In preparing the CBA, the Federal CIO Council took into account both federal and Department of Defense (DoD) service needs, while examining any lessons learned from agencies’ recent IT service requirements. The team also spent considerable time evaluating the Networx Universal and Enterprise contracts to understand both the scope and the technical characteristics of potential service offerings on each.

The CBA examined the Networx contract to determine whether its use would satisfy FTS2001 requirements as well

as non-FTS2001 requirements, such as the National Security System (NSS). In both cases, the analysis focused on comparing solutions that could be satisfied either by a single Networx-priced service or combination of multiple Networx-priced services. The CBA also considered requirements that could be satisfied using Networx customer-specified statement of work (SOW) services.

In the end, the CBA found Networx to be more flexible than previous GSA Government-Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs), because it allows agencies to develop SOWs for services that are not part of any pre-priced Contract Line Item Number (CLIN). An added benefit to agencies adopting the Networx contract is that OMB, having already conducted its extensive CBA of Networx, is waiving the requirement for agencies to conduct their own cost-benefit analyses.

That’s important because agencies that choose a non-Networx provider must complete both the CBA for that contract and an extensive comparison of why they chose that provider over Networx. The analysis must include requirements that are specifically priced in, or are within scope of, the Networx Universal or Enterprise contracts – including requirements that can be satisfied by completing a Networx SOW. ▼

Online bonus story

# Managing Complexity

No one ever said that the process of transitioning all federal agencies to the largest telecommunications contract in history would be an easy job. That's because in and of itself, the promise of lower prices and higher functionality can't magically make the task easier for Networkx contractors and their customers. "From a vendor point of view, I think the initial concern was around the slow movement of agencies to the new contract," Kevin Plexico, senior vice president for research and analysis at INPUT, told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. "And I think that's still plaguing us today."

From an agency perspective, much of the delay in transitioning to the new contract can be chalked up to its complexity. The Networkx opportunity – its service offerings are far more robust than the forerunner contract FTS2001 – is also the source of the challenge, because greater choice and more contractors make for a far more difficult transition.

Networkx does more than replicate the same services available under the FTS2001 contract – it makes available the newest technologies, including federal network security offerings. FTS2001 made 26 categories of services available to federal agencies, while the Networkx Universal and Enterprise contracts offer 44 categories. The Networkx Universal contract boasts the most categories of service, including IP-based networks and wireless. Networkx Enterprise has fewer services, but a wider range of contractors.

There were other factors early on in the process that complicated the issue for federal agencies, Gartner Vice President Rishi Sood told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. "You had a pushback against it up front," he said. "They had delays in the rollout of the actual announcement of the contract. It's not an easy thing to make a wholesale transition from one contract to another."

The nature of the delays illustrates the fact that government organizations today are being squeezed from all sides. "There's a lot of time and planning that needs to be put in as part of these processes," Sood said, "but we don't have the same level of acquisition workforce that we've had in past generations of contract transitions."

Agencies that directly accepted federal funding to support their transition to Networkx were able to be more aggressive in the deployment, Sood noted. Those early players have paved the way for the second wave of agencies to begin to make their move. "I think we'll see the movement over and the adoption of either of the two contracts really speed up

here over the next 18 months," Sood said.

## Security Issues Move Front And Center

Beyond the cost savings, there are other imperatives – most notably security – driving the need to transition to Networkx. Last November, the Department of Homeland Security began to approve Networkx carriers' plans for Managed Trusted Internet Protocol Services (MTIPS), which are being offered through both the Universal and Enterprise contracts.

GSA developed MTIPS for the Networkx program to allow agencies physically and logically to connect to the Internet in full compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Trusted Internet Connections initiative (TIC). MTIPS aims to make it easier for agencies to reduce the number of connections to the public Internet and provide secure IP portals for agency traffic to and from the public Internet. MTIPS also provides standard security services to all government users.

"MTIPS services are about complete," Karl Krumbholz, deputy assistant commissioner of network services at GSA, said last November. "The carriers will have built out their capabilities by the end of this year, and agencies will be able to take advantage of MTIPS services in the very near term." MTIPS comprises the network infrastructure to transport IP traffic between the agency enterprise wide-area network (WAN) and the TIC portal. Together they create an agency TIC Trusted Domain (DMZ) for IP traffic.

No one will argue that this is a critically important mission when the security of federal networks is at stake. But working through security issues further complicates the challenge of transitioning to Networkx. Agencies are grappling with two key issues regarding security, according to Sood: compliance with existing mandates and the price and logistics of security audits.

"I think Networkx modernization is the core component of how they will approach security responsibilities wholesale throughout the agency," Sood said. "Simply having the old traditional way of doing business within the agencies provides too many security gaps in the modern infrastructure. So to me, that's where Networkx modernization really helps clarify and get rid of a lot of the suspected openings and backdoors that security violations cause."

## Taking The Plunge

Despite the challenges of transitioning to Networkx, agencies are not sitting on the sidelines. Recent contract

awards include (but are not limited to) those made by Health and Human Services (HHS), NASA, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Last fall, Qwest Government Services received a \$14.2 million contract award to upgrade NASA's Corporate Backbone circuits from an existing speed of 2.5Gbps (gigabits per second) to 10Gbps.

NASA's Corporate Backbone is the high-speed broadband network that provides corporate wide area network (WAN) transport for e-mail, collaboration, and scientific, financial and business applications for the agency's headquarters, field centers, and numerous facilities and partner locations across the country and the world.

That deal, which featured Qwest's Optical Wave Services (OWS), followed another \$18 million contract with NASA for voice and data services, as well as a \$60 million contract for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Last month, AT&T Government Solutions won a task order worth approximately \$29 million to deploy a WAN solution for the EPA's WAN 2010 Project. AT&T also will

provide MTIPS to enhance the security of EPA's network and will leverage its transition planning and network management services to deploy a converged, managed IP network solution that will enable the EPA to transform and modernize its WAN architecture.

Also last month, HHS awarded Verizon Business a \$187 million contract to deliver an integrated customer contact solution that will route one million customer calls each week. The agreement provides the agency with a range of audio and web-based collaboration services to help HHS boost productivity among its employees so that the agency can better serve callers.

These kinds of agency commitments are a good sign for the future of the Networx transition, Sood believes. "Now that we're through the first wave of agencies – EPA and NASA and HHS all making decisions now – you're certainly through a host of agencies that have made the argument in favor of Networx," he said. "I think you'll see those other mid-tier agencies come along as well." ▼

Online bonus story

# The Networx Transition Checklist

Since it's clear that federal agencies will have to transition to Networx, what are some of the elements they must have in place to get it done successfully? "Having dedicated funding is one thing," Gartner Vice President Rishi Sood told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media. "Setting aside money to support that transition over and above what their baseline is - or something that's directly appropriated on top of what they're getting for fiscal 2011. I think that's most important."

Second, agencies must be prepared to put some teeth behind the compliance issues associated with Trusted Internet Connections (TIC) and other mandates. "It takes rolling up your sleeves to make sure that you're getting the right amount of lines, to understand what the cost advantage is or what the safety/disaster recovery issues need to be once you're transitioning voice lines, for example," Sood continued. "That's just some of the hard work that needs to be done."

Although the recent deadline extensions give federal agencies a little relief, time continues to be a scarce commodity in the transition, because when the bridge contracts end, something has to be in place to keep the phones (and other services) turned on.

Karl Krumbholz, deputy assistant commissioner of network services at GSA, appears optimistic that agencies will be able to complete the task. "[O]nce the orders are in, implementation of the orders can be a combination of activities both by the agencies and by the carriers themselves," he told Washington Technology. "In an actual physical transition, it requires coordination from the old carrier, the new carrier and the agency all working together to make that happen."

## Transition Planning Checklist

Transitioning to Networx is no easy job, but careful planning is necessary if agencies are to minimize the impact on their services, bring new services up more quickly and reduce costs. GSA believes that perhaps the biggest benefit smart planning can deliver is making sure that an agency completes its transition to Networx before the FTS2001 and Crossover contracts expire. Here's what agencies need to do to succeed:

- **Identify Key Personnel.** You need to identify the key people in your agency who will be point persons for the Networx transition. These people include the Designated Agency Representative (DAR), the DAR Administrator and the transition managers.
- **Validate FTS2001 Inventory.** You need to know where you are before you can get where you're going. That's why performing an FTS2001 baseline inventory is so important. It ensures that your agency has a comprehensive understanding of the services that must be disconnected. It also provides information on planning for the initial growth of services on Networx. GSA's Transition Baseline Inventory (TBI) is available to help agencies develop an accurate baseline inventory via the Monthly Online Records and Reports of Information Technology Services (MORRIS). It identifies services that must be transitioned and disconnected from FTS2001 contracts; provides a baseline for consistently measuring transition progress across all agencies, contractors, and services; provides input to the Networx Pricer; enables transaction tracking through the Networx Transition Information Portal and supports the transition reimbursement process.
- **Develop Requirements.** Your agency should conduct a full analysis of its current inventory of telecom services and project its future operational requirements. These steps will drive your requirements by determining how Networx service offerings can best meet your agency's needs. Then, your agency can select a vendor through the Fair Opportunity (FO) process to meet those requirements. The Steps for Requirements Development outlined in the Networx FO and SOW (Statement of Work) Guide include: determining requirements, documenting requirements and service groups, performing market research, determining acquisition, determining the process type and determining the SOW development options. You may discover that your agency is best served by using both the Universal and Enterprise acquisitions. For example, an agency requiring call center services may wish to use the Enterprise contract to meet those needs while using the Universal contract for information transport services, such as frame relay.
- **Conduct Fair Opportunity.** Fair Opportunity (FO) for Networx involves using the above requirements, analysis and selection criteria to select one or more Networx Service Providers to meet your agency's specific requirements. There are two processes from which your agency can choose: the Standard Process and the

Statement of Work (SOW) process. The Standard Process is used when an agency exercises the established fixed-price Contract Line Item Numbers (CLINs) in the Networx contracts. The Statement of Work (SOW) Process is used when agencies have unique requirements for which there are not established CLINs in the Networx contracts. The bottom line is that FO enables the agency to select the Networx contractor best suited to meet its unique needs. However, you must document why you decided to do this then forward the decision to the GSA Contracting Officer.

- **Obtain Contract Modification for SOW Requirements.**

If your agency does need to opt for the SOW process, you must submit the SOW to GSA's Networx Contracting Officer for review and scope determination. When GSA approves the SOW, the agency must agree to any changes. At that point, GSA will issue the SOW to Networx contractors and the contractors will develop proposals. After reviewing the proposals, the agency

will make a selection and provide justification for the decision to GSA. After GSA reviews the decision, the agency must inform the contractors of the selection. GSA will work with the contractor to modify the contract to include any SOW information that is not currently there. GSA will modify the Networx CLIN structure to add the new requirements and pricing information for future services selections.

- **Transition Local Services.** In this step, GSA Regional Services will coordinate with agencies to set up processes to transition local services delivered through the regional consolidated systems. The office works directly with service providers and agency customers to develop regional transition plans, perform regional assessments, identify requirements, and process transition orders. GSA Regional Services aims to help reduce or eliminate risks to agencies by sharing lessons learned from prior transitions, implementing best practices, and providing expertise in resolving challenging transition issues. ▼