SATCOM

Search Skyward For Solutions

GSA's Satellite Services-II (SATCOM-II) program provides an expanded range of end-to-end satellite solutions for government agencies.

Just imagine you are working in a remote location where no wire line or wireless infrastructure exists and you need reliable communications.

Imagine you are a Warfighter on foreign soil who needs communications and logistics support.

Or you are a First Responder rushing to a domestic emergency and you need untethered capabilities for communications.

Or you are an agency executive who is charged with making sure there are diverse methods in your COOP to preserve and enable critical communications.

Each of you is a prime candidate for satellite communications capabilities. And GSA's popular SATCOM-II contract is your way to get these life-saving capabilities now.

The Satellite Alternative

According to GSA, SATCOM-II contracts are multiple award IDIQ Fixed Price contracts. They are not GSA Schedules, GWACs, or MACs. SATCOM-II allows you to place task orders directly with SATCOM-II contractors using Direct Order/Direct Bill.

You can also use GSA's e-Buy to post Request For Quotes (RFQ's) and request For Proposals (RFP's). All the nuts and bolts are contained in the SATCOM-II Customer User Guide available at www.gsa.gov/satcom.

SATCOM-II provides solutions for GSA's customers with critical national missions or need alternative sources for bandwidth for their COOP and disaster recovery planning. The contract provides not only today's satellite communications technologies, but is designed to keep pace with the growth in satellite technologies expected during the next five years. Of the 25 firms awarded SATCOM-II contracts, 16 are large businesses and 9 are small businesses.

Poised For Growth

Jim Russo is the SATCOM-II program manager. In a recent interview with 1105 Custom Media he spoke about some of the some of the unique requirements agencies have and why somebody would turn to having satellite communications versus basic wire line and the cell service that you see now.

Russo is confident satellite communications are going to continue to grow as savvy buyers see its benefits.

"Look at the diversity of the government," said Russo. "From the DOD perspective, it's well documented that the DOD depends on commercial SATCOM to provide bandwidth and capacity to work both the military actions in defense."

"Satellite communications really are a cost effective way to extend communications to a geographically diverse set of users and places where it's simply not cost effective to put in either a wire line or a terrestrial wireless solution," explained Russo.

"There are broad swaths of the country where there's no business case that anybody can make to build a tower every so many miles to cover vast stretches where the population density isn't enough to support it," Russo added. "So satellite buyers are looking at solutions that will cover the needs of the government's requirements."

A Busy Year

SATCOM-II is in its second year and previous SATCOM contracts have been transitioned to SATCOM-II .

"We have already got more than 130 task orders and there are already 39 agencies using products and services that they've acquired through SATCOM –II," said Russo. "In January 2008 we went live on our GSA e-Buy system and we use that for customers to easily find our contractors."

Russo explained that buyers post their requirements or statements of work (SOW) or however they choose to write their statement of requirements on e-Buy. They can go to a section of e-Buy specifically for SATCOM-II that allows them to manage the competition.

"So for customers, it will send the requirements,

Telecommunications Expense Management Services

SATCOM works closely with other GSA programs including Networx and GSA Schedules. One of the latest initiatives is Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative contracts covering Telecommunications Expense Management Services.

Awarded in spring 2008, the purpose of these contracts is to provide a way for agencies to contract with an integrator that would provide a diagnostic that would help the agency do a myriad of services Russo said.

"It would determine what their wireless inventory would be, their wireless requirements, perhaps their policies and help with the policies if the agencies so chose," Russo added.

"Then to take those requirements and bounce them against the providers' offerings in coverage areas, to tell the agencies what the best carriers would be in certain situations and to be able to mix and match carrier offerings, because as you travel across the country in certain areas one provider may have better coverage than others and go through the whole life cycle and help with billing, provisioning and technology, refreshment"

According to Russo, the whole purpose is to provide third party engineering assistance to agencies, help them navigate the waters of all the multiple choices they have in terms of wireless and pricing plans and break points and when you should go with a data plan versus a voice and data plan or bucket plans.

"There's just so much to consider and the way that the agencies are also distributed; that plays a big part in it too."

GSA has awarded contracts to three providers – Avalon, Isis LLC and Booz, Allen, Hamilton.

"They are basically open for business. We are spreading the word on this new offering to as many places as we can and making that option known to the agencies as another way that they can access the services," Russo said.

"Now buyers would actually be able to purchase the services from the carriers, through these integrators and touch say Networx to provide the wireless and touch SATCOM-II to provide the satellite services, or touch the GSA Schedules perhaps to do the wireless cellular services, " Russo went on to say.

"So it really doesn't limit where the services can come from; it's really just an aid in helping the agencies make a smart decision and manage their assets."

"We have a whole set of tools on the website. Customer guides, the contracts are posted, the prices are posted and some tutorials are posted," said Russo. And while it's not part of SATCOM-II, it is another way for users to reach SATCOM-II ."

Buyers looking for this service should go to www.gsa.gov/fssitem. ❏

the requests for quotes out to all 25 of our contractors and then it will serve as a coordination point for the customers to see who has responded, who has declined, and they give the contractors a response date," explained Russo.

"Everybody is given the opportunity to see the requirements and bid against them and the customers ultimately get the best deal. That's actually a pretty big deal because we are the first telecommunications program within GSA to be on e-Buy. And we are looking to add some of our new wireless telecommunications expenses management contracts to e-Buy as well."

SATCOM-II Contacts

GSA's Web Portal
http://www.gsa.gov/satcom

SATCOM-II Program Office
Jim Russo 703-306-6631
jim.russo@gsa.gov
Annette Cole 703-306-7670
annette.cole@gsa.gov
Anita Keeler 703-306-6306
anita.keeler@gsa.gov

SATCOM-II Contracts Office
Peggy Van Tassel 703-306-6469
peggy.vantassel@gsa.gov
Patti Stang 703-306-6404
patricia.stang@gsa.gov

Source: GSA April 2008

"We are constantly updating and upgrading our service offerings. So the contractors are fully engaged in this," said Russo.

"e-Buy is bringing customers to the table that are looking for services. That spawns competition for products and services which keeps the contractors engaged because they see a stream of users and needs. It gives them ideas on how to market the program because they see what the users are asking for." ❏

11 Ways SATCOM-II Puts You In Orbit

SATCOM-II Program Manager Jim Russo shares his "top ten plus one list" of what SATCOM-II has to offer government.

1. SATCOM-II offers end-to-end commercial satellite solutions, includingservices and equipment.

According the GSA website SATCOM-II provides four types of services:

- **Type I Services – Transport Services**
  All service providers offer Mobile Satellite Service, Fixed Satellite Service, or both.
- **Type II Services – Applications Services**
  All service providers offer at least one Satellite Applications Service. These may be Distance Learning, Emergency Response/Continuity of Operations Planning, Telemedicine, Streaming Video, and Broadcast Satellite Service (BSS).
- **Type III Services – Design, Engineering, and Maintenance Services**
  Design, Engineering, and Maintenance Services provide satellite system engineering design, configuration, installation, implementation, training, and ongoing maintenance and operational support for the services delivered under Service Types I and II.
- **Type IV Services – Professional Support Services** (**Small Business only**)
  Professional Support Services include abstract or concept studies and analysis, strategic and preliminary planning, requirements definition and analysis, the evaluation of alternative technical approaches, modeling and simulation, enterprise architecture design, cost/cost-performance trade-off analysis, feasibility analysis, regulatory compliance support, system engineering, independent verification and validation, and Information Assurance certification and accreditation.

2. There are 25 contractors under the SATCOM-II program; 16 large businesses, and 9 small businesses. All contractors provide at least one service from Service Types I and II, and all of Service Type III.

SATCOM-II is open to all Civilian and Military Agencies and other entities identified in GSA ADM4800.2e. Third parties may place order on behalf of a Federal Agency provided FAR 51.102 is met. However state and local governments are not authorized to use SATCOM-II. They can use GSA Schedules.

3. SATCOM-II contractors include space segment providers, integrators, and companies specializing in providing engineering services.

SATCOM-II contractors provide a variety of emergency response and disaster recovery solutions, distance learning solutions, telemedicine solutions and satellite Internet access and video streaming and broadcast services.

4. Customers can receive quotes at any time from the SATCOM-II contractors by using the GSA e-Buy system.

Start by visiting the GSA web site at www.gsa.gov/satcom. At GSA's web site you will find resources such as the SATCOM-II Customer Users Guide and Contractors Services Matrices.

Access SATCOM-II contracts online through links to each contractor's web site to see what each has to offer. Then access e-Buy for SATCOM-II; select Network Services and Telecommunications under the GSA Technology Contracts listing; then select SATCOM-II.

5. Customers can place Task Orders using the Direct Order/Direct Bill or the GSA Assisted Services option.

Customers can use the Direct Order/Direct Bill (using Fair Opportunity) option. First, use e-Buy for RFQs and RFPs. Then, review each Contractor's contract online. Determine which contractors provide service/equipment and places order with appropriate contractor in accordance with the FAR.

Agencies place task order directly with contractor after receiving response to RFP or RFQ. A 2% contract management fee has been included in all contract pricing.

Or you can use GSA Assisted Services where your regional GSA office can perform ordering and billing services as desired by the customer. An additional fee will apply.

6. There is no minimum order for SATCOM-II and all contractors offer at least one type of satellite transport service (mobile or fixed), one satellite based application, and all supporting engineering services such as installation and maintenance.

There is no minimum order value and the maximum order can up to the individual contractor's NTE amount. SATCOM-II is a services contract. Construction is out of scope under SATCOM-II, unless it is combined as part of providing a service and not individually priced as a single contract line item.

7. Satellite is a Green technology – a satellite receives almost all its power from solar energy.

Russo explained that "if you just stand back and look at the Washington DC region, and I'll pick the top 12 terrestrial broadcasters and tally up how many megawatts it takes at any given point in time for them to broadcast their signal, the carbon dioxide that those transmitters generate over a year is some finite number, whereas the satellite is beaming the same content to the same users, arguably the same users, using solar power."

8. GSA has established a dedicated program and contracting team to serve SATCOM-II customers and contractors.

Over the past year, Russo feels that the program has gained a lot of traction as people get more familiar with the program.

"They see its advantages, they see we have a dedicated program and contracting team in place that are savvy in the area of satellite services," Russo explained. "They understand the differences between mobile and fixed satellite services. They know who the contractors are and who specializes in what services, they understand the pricing factors and the way to market all that."

Further by having that dedicated team the SATCOM-II team is able to help the customers and the contractors quickly execute modifications and proposals. "We make sure that our contract stays within scope; we keep it focused and we are good about talking to the customers about how to use the program," said Russo.

9. Since program inception last year, over 39 Federal Agencies have already placed orders with SATCOM-II contractors.

"We've got our guides up on line and we revise them to keep them fresh and up to date, said Russo.

"We make sure that people know that it's a task order based program; and we tell them here's what you have to do to place an order. So I think we've laid the ground work and we are reaping the benefits of that now."

10. The GSA portfolio also includes satellite equipment available through GSA Schedules and satellite network access available through Networx.

SATCOM-II: Offers a complete suite of commercial, Mobile, Fixed, and Broadcast services and equipment as well as end-to-end satellite-centric solutions such as Emergency Communications kits and Distance Learning networks. Any satellite service offered commercially is within scope and offered through one or more SATCOM-II contractors.

Networx Universal: Two of the Networx Universal contractors (AT&T and Verizon) offer satellite services. AT&T offers Mobile and Fixed satellite services; Verizon offers Fixed and Broadcast satellite services. The Networx satellite services can support a complete suite of telecommunications and networking services to extend the reach of an Agency's global network and must meet the technical specifications incorporated in the Networx contracts. See www.gsa.gov/networx for more information.

Networx Enterprise: Satellite services were optional and none of the five contract holders bid or were awarded satellite services.

GSA Schedules: Equipment, services and labor are available from more than two dozen suppliers. Schedules can be used by federal, state and local government buyers.

Russo noted that GSA Schedules, SATCOM-II and Networx are all viable ways for agencies to acquire satellite solutions for their particular requirements. "We really do complement each other."

11. Competitive Pricing, continuous competition and high quality service make SATCOM-II a win-win for your agency.

Russo said all equipment and services offered under the SATCOM-II contract are equal to or less than commercial pricing. By awarding multiple contracts that provide a broad array of service options, it ensures continuous competition among service providers throughout the life of the acquisition. All that leads to ensuring high quality service is delivered throughout the terms of the contracts. ❏

Source: GSA

Public Perspectives

Jim Russo, SATCOM-II Program Manager, GSA

SATCOM-II program manager Jim Russo talks about what makes SATCOM-II fly in this interview with 1105 Custom Media.

Q. 1105 Custom Media: In a nutshell, tell us about the value that SATCOM-II delivers.

A. Jim Russo

We are a solutions based program, so all of our contractors have the ability to provide end to end solutions. We have a very diverse and capable group of contractors; we provide the space segment; we've got integrators; we've got companies that are really based in engineering services, as their forte.

We've got a very large component of small businesses as well. Nine of our 25 are small businesses. We've positioned SATCOM-II as part of our integrated portfolio. The key tenets of the program: we are on e-Buy; we've got 39 agencies as users and looking for more; satellites are a green technology; we have dedicated contract teams that are married to the program and give the program continuity. I think those are the key features.

And GSA Schedules, SATCOM-II and Networx are all viable ways for agencies to acquire satellite solutions for their particular requirements. We really do complement each other.

Q: For IT services, some agencies are developing their own contracts, such as DHS's EAGLE, rather than using government-wide contracts. Is that happening for satellite services?

A: Actually we do see some of that, so that's nothing that's unique. But what we are finding is where agencies perhaps have their own vehicle right now, or they have put something in place temporarily because they weren't quite sure what SATCOM-II was and how it could help them; they are now seeing where groups such as Armed Forces Radio and TV Systems, the Government Alliance for Training and Education and other customers have come to SATCOM –II; they've run a quick and efficient competition and found a good service at a good price with a good contractor.

They are giving us a look now to see if maybe they've overlooked us and perhaps for the next fiscal year, they are considering SATCOM-II. We've seen some of that and we've also seen some of those folks then turning back to us and looking at what we have, so they become more confident in the value of the program.

We have provided global bandwidth for intelligence networks. The Armed Forces Radio and TV System is providing a pretty neat service – digital TV direct to Sailors over with the broadcast services through our contract. Social Security has just come on board as well with an interactive distance learning application through us. And we've had numerous orders for emergency communications equipment. A number of our contractors have packaged kits that are specifically put in for disaster recovery situations, or emergency response. And a number of agencies have come to us looking to purchase those types of things.

Q: Are there any security issues? Is everything encrypted already?

A: That's a good point. That's been one of our concerns for a while, secure services. You can look at it in two ways. One is: is the data that is being transmitted over the satellite secure? And the answer to that depends on the generator, the originator and the receiver of the data. The majority of our services really depend on data transparency, that's one of the requirements of our contract, where we require the satellite provider to basically do no harm to the data that flows over their circuits.

So the answer there is if the data that enters is encrypted, it will stay encrypted until it leaves the system. So from that standpoint we offer the same level of security that the commercial satellite industry offers anyone else.

Q: So if I'm an agency and I'm confident that the information that I'm transmitting is secure based on my own system requirements, then I can feel confident that when it gets to the receiver that it is still secure?

A: That's correct. And the second point of it is the operations security of the satellite. How do you know that the management of the satellite is secure?

How do you know that someone can't hijack control of the satellite and do a denial of service for example? Turn the transponders on and off at will, etc.

All the commercial SATCOM providers have done their due diligence, put operations security in place and the DOD has done a whole analysis of this. They wouldn't be using these satellites if they weren't deemed to be operationally secure. So we are using and providing access to the same commercial satellites that DOD accesses through their own contracts. So from that standpoint, we are as operationally secure as they would be using the same providers.

Q: GSA is really a leader in the "Green Government" movement. Is SATCOM-II involved?
A: Yes. Satellite communications really can be seen as a green technology.

Think of it intuitively and just think of it in simple terms: the satellite broadcast service. The satellite will broadcast in multiple beams if you have Direct TV or Dish Network; there are multiple channels, many of them are high definition channels; they are high bandwidth channels being beamed continuously to earth, even spot beams because all of the local broadcasters have their channels beamed into the local city, or whatever.

If you just stand back and look at the Washington DC region, and I'll pick the top 12 terrestrial broadcasters and tally up how many megawatts it takes at any given point in time for them to broadcast their signal, the carbon dioxide that those transmitters generate over a year is some finite number whereas the satellite is beaming the same content to the same users, arguably the same users, using solar power.

So just intuitively you can see that the use of the satellite to broadcast content communications creates a lot less carbon dioxide than, in fact none, as compared to terrestrial methods. ❑

Industry Insight

Hughes SATCOM-II Solutions for Federal Agencies

Satellite technologies should be an important part of every federal agency's networking strategy. Satellite-based solutions offer agencies path diversity and a redundant networking option, enabling employees to continue working even if the agency's primary terrestrial network fails. Furthermore, satellite technology is ubiquitous, reaching the most rural locations, and ensuring remote offices are connected.

As a GSA SATCOM-II provider, Hughes Network Systems, LLC (HUGHES), offers a complete package of satellite solutions, services, and support for SATCOM-II customers. Hughes stands ready to work with agencies to deliver networking solutions including mobile, transportable, and fixed sites – encompassing design, engineering, installation, operations, maintenance, and support for mission-critical applications such as:
  • Continuity of Operations
  • Distance learning
  • Emergency preparedness/response
  • Streaming video
  • Telework
  • Telemedicine

Hughes' SATCOM-II broadband satellite solutions/services include:
  • Broadband primary, high availability, and back-up networks utilizing fixed or transportable very small aperture terminals (VSATs)
  • Managed network services
  • Mobile satellite voice and data services
  • Multicast or broadcast satellite services
  • Point-to-point and mesh connections
  • Satellite capacity
  • Transportable services

To learn how Hughes can help support your agency's goals via SATCOM-II, please contact us at 1-800-416-8679 or visit government.hughes.com.