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National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA
Space Communications and Navigation (SCaN) Program
300 E ST SW
Washington, D.C. 20546-0001

NextSTEP-3 APPENDIX E: Network Extension for User Continuity and Sustainability (NEXUS) Backward-Compatible Ka-Band Relay Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)

Broad Agency Announcement No. 80MSFC26R0006

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Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
APMC	Agency Program Management Council
ATC	Authority To Connect
ATP	Authority To Proceed
BAA	Broad Agency Announcement
BC	Backward-Compatibility / Backward-Compatible
BOE	Basis of Estimate
CASQ	Commercial Architecture Security Questionnaire
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CLIN	Contract Line Item Number
ConOps	Concept of Operations
CSP	Communications Services Project
CUI	Controlled Unclassified Information
CY	Calendar Year
DCAA	Defense Contract Audit Agency
DCMA	Defense Contract Management Agency
DD Form 254	DoD Contract Security Classification Specification
DPAS	Defense Priorities and Allocations System
DPD	Data Procurement Document
DRDs	Data Requirements Descriptions
DWRP	Deviations and Waiver Request Package (DWRP)
EAR	Export Administration Regulations
EFSS	Enterprise File Sharing and Sync
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FDIR	Fault Detection, Isolation, and Recovery
FFP	Firm Fixed Price
FFRDC	Federally Funded Research and Development Center
FMV	Fair Market Value
FY	Fiscal Year
GPE	Governmentwide Point of Entry
GPM	Global Precipitation Measurement
GRS	GRS Recovery
GSA/ISOO	General Services Administration / Information Security Oversight Office
HSPD-12	Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12
HST	Hubble Space Telescope
IMS	Integrated Master Schedule
IP	Intellectual Property
IR&D	Independent Research and Development
ISS	International Space Station
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulations
JPSS	Joint Polar Satellite System

Acronym	Definition
JPL	Jet Propulsion Laboratory
JV	Joint Venture
Ka-band / Ka	Ka-band frequency designation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPSR	Monthly Program Status Report
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NEXUS	Network Extension for User Continuity and Sustainability
NFS	NASA FAR Supplement
NPD	NASA Policy Directive
NPG	NASA Procedural Guidelines
NPR	NASA Procedural Requirements
NSF	National Science Foundation
OCI	Organizational Conflict of Interest
OFI	Offeror Fill-In
POC	Point of Contact
Q&A	Question and Answer
R&D	Research and Development
RF	Radio Frequency
RFP	Request for Proposals
ROM	Rough Order of Magnitude
SCaN	Space Communications and Navigation
SSL	Space to Space Link
SO	Selection Official
SOO	Statement of Objectives
SOW	Statement of Work
SRD	Service Requirements Document
TBD	To Be Determined
TDRS	Tracking and Data Relay Satellite
TDRSS	Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System
TIM(s)	Technical Interchange Meeting(s)
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
V&V	Verification and Validation

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Overview

NASA faces a credible risk of losing critical space-to-ground communications for key on-orbit missions in the Calendar Year (CY) 2029–2031 timeframe due to the aging Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS) and the lack of currently available backward-compatible commercial alternatives. TDRSS is a critical national asset that enables continuous relay communications for NASA missions with significant operational and scientific importance. Legacy users that depend on existing TDRS-compatible capabilities cannot transition to new frequency bands or relay architectures without major spacecraft modifications, placing telemetry, tracking, command services, and ultimately mission safety and scientific return, at risk.

Through the Space Communications and Navigation (SCaN) program and SCaN's Communications Services Project (CSP), NASA is pursuing a targeted transition strategy that leverages mature commercial space communications capabilities while investing in the development and demonstration of the specific compatibility features needed for legacy TDRS-compatible users. This approach is intended to reduce technical risk, preserve industry flexibility to innovate, and enable the fastest feasible transition to sustained operational relay capability. Project NEXUS, a CSP subproject, seeks proposed solutions capable of demonstrating the key Ka-band backward-compatible relay capabilities needed to preserve long-term continuity for legacy Government users.

NEXUS will demonstrate a viable, TDRS-compatible relay capability preserving Government mission assurance, continuity protections, and strategic flexibility consistent with NASA's operational responsibilities for this communications capability. The Agency's objective is to demonstrate and mature this capability by leveraging commercial infrastructure, investment, and operational approaches wherever practical, while retaining the Government's ability to assess and select the most appropriate long-term model for ownership, operations, mission assurance, continuity protection, and service delivery. Results from this demonstration may inform future Agency decisions regarding sustained relay capability needs, including the appropriate ownership, operational, acquisition, service, and continuity models. This solicitation does not establish or guarantee any specific future follow-on acquisition, ownership model, operational construct, provider, or service arrangement.

To meet NASA's needs, Offerors must propose a solution that operates in NASA's heritage TDRS frequency bands and provides a backward-compatible, waveform-agnostic bent-pipe relay capability without requiring any modifications to current, legacy Government user spacecraft.

While primarily supporting SCaN's CSP portfolio and near-term relay continuity, the demonstrated capability may also support NASA's broader cislunar, lunar surface, and exploration objectives by advancing scalable, resilient, and sustainable commercial approaches to space communications needed for increasingly complex missions beyond low Earth orbit. In addition, NEXUS will strengthen the domestic industrial base, mature commercially provided relay capabilities, and demonstrate acquisition and operational approaches applicable to future cislunar, lunar surface, Mars, and exploration communications architectures.

1.2 General Information for Participants

- **Agency:** National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) George C. Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC)
- **Responsible Division:** Office of Procurement (OP), Science, Technology, and Engineering Division (PS50)
- **Point of Contact:** Jacquelyn Pletcher, Contracting Officer **MSFC-NEXUS@mail.nasa.gov**
- **Proposal Submittals:** Proposals must be submitted electronically through NASA's EFSS Box no later than 10:00 a.m. Central Time (CT), July 10, 2026. Hard copies will not be accepted.
- **Proposal Validity:** Offers submitted in response to this solicitation must remain in effect until December 31, 2026. However, a different longer validity period may be proposed. Offers with validity periods expiring before December 31, 2026, risk ineligibility for award if the Government awards without competitive negotiations and the validity period has elapsed prior to award being made.
- **Rating:** NASA anticipates any resultant contract awarded will receive a Defense Priorities and Allocations System (DPAS) rating of DO-A7.
- **Inquiries:** Written questions must be submitted no later than five calendar days after final solicitation posting to SAM.gov. The questions must not contain proprietary or sensitive information. NASA will not provide evaluations, opinions, or recommendations regarding any suggested approaches or concepts. All correspondence must be directed to Jacquelyn Pletcher, Contracting Officer at msfc-nexus@mail.nasa.gov, with the exception of questions regarding SAM.gov-related issues. SAM.gov-related questions should **only** be directed to SAM.gov at https://sam.gov/about/contact, not NASA.
- **Industry Forum:** A pre-solicitation notification was released March 23, 2026, a draft solicitation package was released April 9, 2026, a draft solicitation industry day was conducted April 14, 2026, interested industry vendor visits and one-on-one engagements were conducted April 14, 2026-April 29, 2026, and a final draft solicitation industry day was conducted May 14, 2026. All draft materials continued to be posted on SAM.gov and the NextSTEP website. No further industry forums will be conducted.
- **Website for Reference Information:** https://sam.gov/, http://nasa.gov/nextstep

This Appendix E solicitation constitutes a BAA as contemplated by FAR Part 35 and NFS Part 1835.

NASA will not issue paper copies of this Appendix. The Appendix and associated Appendix related documents, and other information may be obtained and downloaded from the NextSTEP website or http://www.SAM.gov. Offerors are encouraged to refer regularly to these sites for updates and other information.

Issues with SAM.gov access, questions about navigating the SAM.gov website, or questions about document access in SAM.gov should be directed only to SAM.gov (https://sam.gov/about/contact).

2 Opportunity Description

2.1 Acquisition Approach and Scope

This solicitation requires Offerors to propose, develop, and conduct an on-orbit demonstration of a focused, end-to-end Ka-band relay capability that supports legacy TDRS-compatible users. The demonstration must address the backward-compatibility, integration, and operational features necessary to show that the proposed capability can transition from demonstration to sustained operational use.

The proposed solution must include the space, ground, network, launch, integration, operations, and service-management elements necessary to demonstrate a credible and traceable path to sustained backward-compatible relay service availability. The proposed approach must also demonstrate how the capability can support operational backward-compatible relay services for a minimum of 15 years.

NASA's objective is to initiate on-orbit demonstration activities no later than the end of Calendar Year 2028. The demonstration must provide sufficient technical, operational, schedule, service-assurance, and business evidence to support future sustained-service acquisition decisions and enable incremental sustained service availability beginning in 2029, with full operational service capability attainable by mid-2031.

The demonstration provided under this Appendix E must serve as the first operationally relevant increment of the Offeror's proposed sustained-service architecture, not a standalone or non-representative demonstration. The demonstration must be technically traceable to the proposed sustained-service architecture and must include a credible path to incremental sustained service availability without requiring fundamental redesign of the demonstrated architecture, user compatibility approach, or service delivery model.

NASA is not prescribing a specific orbital architecture, deployment approach, ownership model, or technical solution. Offerors must propose the architecture and implementation approach they determine best satisfies the NEXUS requirements, provided the proposed solution supports the service needs of legacy TDRS-compatible users without requiring modifications to current, legacy Government user spacecraft. NASA will evaluate proposals based on feasibility, risk, scalability, operational suitability, interoperability, long-term service flexibility, and the ability to meet the stated requirements and demonstration objectives.

For purposes of this solicitation, a commercially provided relay capability means an end-to-end capability in which the Offeror is responsible for providing the space, ground, network, integration, operations, and service-management functions needed to meet NEXUS requirements through commercial capabilities, infrastructure, investment, and operational approaches. This term refers to the manner in which the capability is developed, furnished, operated, and managed by the Offeror, and does not provide or imply commercial access to the NEXUS Ka-band frequencies, which are reserved for Government mission use.

2.2 Emphasis of Appendix E

Appendix E focuses on developing, maturing, integrating, and demonstrating backward-compatible Ka-band relay capabilities needed to support legacy TDRS-compatible users without requiring modifications to current, legacy Government user spacecraft. The NEXUS acquisition is intended to generate the technical, operational, schedule, service-assurance, and business evidence needed to inform future NASA decisions regarding sustained relay capability.
The overall objectives of this acquisition are to:

- Protect continuity for legacy NASA missions operating within defined TDRS Ka-band spectral ranges without requiring modifications to current user spacecraft.
- Demonstrate an operationally viable backward-compatible Ka-band relay capability using a representative implementation of the Offeror's proposed sustained-service architecture.
- Verify applicable requirements and validate performance, coverage, concurrency, handovers where applicable, scheduling, service activation, data delivery, monitoring, and operational execution through phased development, system integration, and on-orbit demonstration.
- Generate sufficient technical, operational, interoperability, cost, schedule, business, and service-assurance data to inform future NASA decisions regarding sustained relay services.
- Preserve long-term operational flexibility, interoperability, continuity, resiliency, and the potential for a broader multi-user commercial relay ecosystem.
- Demonstrate that the proposed architecture, deployment approach, launch strategy, ground and network integration, operations concept, supply chain, and business model can support transition from demonstration to incremental sustained service availability beginning in 2029 and progression toward full operational capability by mid-2031.
- Achieve service readiness on a timeline that reduces the risk of a legacy service availability gap in the CY 2029–2031 timeframe.

This solicitation does not establish or guarantee any specific future follow-on acquisition, ownership model, operational construct, provider, or service arrangement. NASA may use information generated under this solicitation to inform future sustained-service planning and related acquisition decisions.

NASA intends to award one or more contracts under this solicitation. Each contract will be structured with a base CLIN and two separately priced option CLINs. For purposes of this solicitation, references to "Phase 1," "Phase 2," and "Phase 3" correspond respectively to CLIN 1, CLIN 2, and CLIN 3.

- **Base CLIN 1 / Phase 1:** Concept Maturation and Risk Reduction, 6 months
- **Priced Option CLIN 2 / Phase 2:** System Integration, Flight Demonstration, and Capability Verification and Validation, up to 24 months
- **Priced Option CLIN 3 / Phase 3:** Additional Demonstration, Anomaly Resolution, and Service Validation, up to 6 months

CLIN 1 / Phase 1: Concept Maturation and Risk Reduction
The purpose of CLIN 1 is to mature the Offeror's proposed solution into a concept package that defines the proposed end-to-end relay capability, demonstration approach, verification and validation approach, and path to sustained operations. CLIN 1 enables NASA to assess the concept's technical credibility, execution feasibility, backward compatibility, affordability, transition approach, long-term service sustainability, and overall risk. CLIN 1 milestones, associated DRD deliveries, payment structure, and acceptance criteria are provided in Attachment F, Payment Milestones and Acceptance Criteria.

CLIN 2 / Phase 2: System Integration, Flight Demonstration, and Capability Verification and Validation
The purpose of CLIN 2 is to integrate, verify, mature, and conduct the initial on-orbit demonstration of the selected service concept as an operationally viable backward-compatible Ka-band relay capability. CLIN 2 includes final design maturation, integration, test, regulatory and security readiness, launch/deployment as applicable, orbit insertion, checkout, commissioning, Authority to Connect, Government user connection, and completion of a minimum 30-calendar-day on-orbit performance measurement period. CLIN 2 generates the technical, operational, user-integration, and service-assurance evidence needed to inform NASA's follow-on sustained-service acquisition planning. CLIN 2 milestones, associated DRD deliveries, payment structure, non-payment milestone expectations, and acceptance criteria are provided in Attachment F, Payment Milestones and Acceptance Criteria.

CLIN 3 / Phase 3: Additional Demonstration, Anomaly Resolution, and Service Validation
The purpose of CLIN 3 is to provide an optional demonstration extension and service-validation if NASA determines that additional demonstration, anomaly resolution, retest, extended performance measurement, expanded user interaction, or closeout evidence is needed. CLIN 3 is supplemental to, and not a substitute for, the initial flight demonstration conducted under CLIN 2.

At NASA's discretion, option CLINs may be exercised for one, multiple, or none of the selected Offerors. The decision to exercise any option rests solely with NASA, and no option is guaranteed.

NASA reserves the right to change its acquisition strategy at any time, including the selection of one, multiple, or none of the proposals received. Subject to the availability of funds, NASA intends to award one or more contracts and requires separate firm-fixed-price pricing, a detailed schedule, and an Offeror-prepared Statement of Work (SOW) for each CLIN. The SOW shall be based on the Government's Statement of Objectives (SOO) and shall include the Offeror's proposed technical approach, milestones, deliverables, reviews, and demonstration activities for each CLIN.

Offerors may propose accelerated schedules for completing CLIN objectives, milestones, deliverables, reviews, and demonstration activities. The stated CLIN periods of performance represent maximum planned durations and do not preclude earlier completion when technically and programmatically appropriate.

NASA may, at its discretion, exercise an option CLIN before the end of the preceding CLIN period of performance if the Contractor has satisfactorily completed the applicable objectives, deliverables, reviews, decision criteria, and conditions necessary to proceed. Early completion does not obligate NASA to exercise any option and does not limit NASA's consideration of technical readiness, risk, funding availability, programmatic need, or overall best value.

2.3 NASA Safety Policy

Safety is NASA's highest priority. Safety is the freedom from those conditions that can cause death, injury, occupational illness, damage to or loss of equipment or property, or damage to the environment. NASA's Safety and Mission Assurance requirements are identified in NPR 8715.1, NASA Safety and Health Programs. All research and development conducted under NASA auspices shall conform to these requirements. (NPR 8715.1)

2.4 Availability of Funds for Award

The Government's ability to make award(s) is contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of proposals that NASA determines are acceptable for award under this Appendix E solicitation.

2.5 Funding Restrictions

The following restrictions are applicable to Appendices under this Omnibus:

- The number of awards may change depending on the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious proposals.
- Refer to the Proposal Submission Information section for specific price proposal submission requirements.
- Contract awards will be subject to the provisions of the FAR and the NFS as reflected in the Model Contract attachment of this solicitation.

2.6 Intellectual Property Developed Under an Award

This section defines the intellectual property policies applicable to items developed under an award issued pursuant to this Appendix. Consistent with NASA's objective to advance Ka-band relay technologies through partnership, award recipients are expected to contribute corporate resources in support of their proposed efforts. Intellectual property rights will be allocated in accordance with applicable Federal requirements and the terms of this solicitation to ensure both commercial incentive and appropriate Government access.

2.6.1 Data Rights

For data related to items, components, or processes developed at private expense by the contractor, the Government will require limited rights (i.e., the right of use [except for manufacture] by subcontractors, the right of use [except for manufacture] by other contractors participating in the same Government program, etc. – see FAR 27.404-2(c)). Generally, the

Government has unlimited rights in data first produced in the performance of a contract. However, for co-sponsored research and development activities (i.e., items, components, or processes developed with both the contractor's funds and the Government's funds), the Government will consider taking less than unlimited rights. Such lesser rights will include agreed-to Government purposes (including reprocurement rights) but will exclude rights for commercial purposes which will be retained by the contractor.

For purposes of this solicitation, the term "developed" means that an item, component, or process exists and is workable. Thus, the item or component must have been constructed or the process practiced. Workability is generally established when the item, component, or process has been analyzed or tested sufficiently to demonstrate to reasonable people skilled in the applicable art that there is a high probability that it will operate as intended. Whether, how much, and what type of analysis or testing is required to establish workability depends on the nature of the item, component, or process, and the state of the art. To be considered "developed," the item, component, or process need not be at the stage where it could be offered for sale or sold on the commercial market, nor must the item, component, or process be actually reduced to practice within the meaning of Title 35 of the United States Code (U.S.C.).

2.6.2 Patent Rights

The Government will have certain statutory rights in an invention that is conceived or first actually reduced to practice under a NASA award (51 U.S.C. § 20135) provided that title to such inventions vests in the United States, except where 35 U.S.C. § 202 provides otherwise for nonprofit organizations or small business firms.

Where 51 U.S.C. § 20135 applies i.e., under an award with a large entity, a recipient may request a waiver to obtain title to inventions made under the award in accordance with 51 U.S.C. § 20135(g) and 14 CFR 1245 Subpart 1.

Such a request may be made in advance of the award or within 30 days thereafter. Even if a waiver request is not made, or denied, a large business recipient may request a waiver on individual inventions made during the course of the award.

NASA normally grants requests for waiver unless the interests of the United States are better served by restricting or eliminating all or part of the rights of an Offeror as set forth in 14 CFR 1245.104(b). Among the most important goals are providing incentives to foster inventiveness and encouraging the reporting of inventions. As noted previously, corporate tots are required.

For joint inventions, NASA will typically agree, pursuant to a Joint Ownership Agreement, to refrain from exercising its undivided interest in a manner inconsistent with a recipient's commercial interest.

For all recipients, the patent rights provision in a resulting award will require the disclosure to NASA of all subject inventions made under the contract. NASA considers the reporting of inventions an important metric that will be used to measure whether new technologies are being

developed. Reporting of inventions also protects a recipient's ownership to such inventions since NASA has the right to obtain title in unreported inventions.

3 Eligibility and Qualifications

3.1 Eligibility of Offerors

(a) Offerors and proposed subcontractors (i.e., who require access to export controlled information) must be a United States entity to be eligible to participate in this requirement. Performance of activities under Appendix E requires access to data that is subject to export control regulations. Any entity proposing for a contract under Appendix E must comply with all U.S. export control laws and regulations, including the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), 22 CFR Parts 120 through 130, and the Export Administration Regulations (EAR), 15 CFR Parts 730 through 774, and must demonstrate the entity's compliance and process in the performance of the resulting Appendix E. Violations of these regulations can result in criminal or civil penalties.

(b) Offerors are responsible for ensuring that all employees who will work on this contract are eligible under export control laws, EAR, and ITAR. Therefore, Offerors must confirm that all employees participating in this requirement are U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents and continue to ensure U.S. citizenship or permanent U.S. residency as reflected in Attachment H, NEXUS TDRS-BC Model Contract, FAR 52.222-54, Employment Eligibility Verification.

(c) In accordance with NFS 1852.225-71, Restriction on Funding Activity with China, proposals must not include bilateral participation, collaboration, or coordination with China or any Chinese-owned company or entity, whether funded or performed under a no-exchange-of-funds arrangement. By submission of a proposal, Offerors are certifying that the proposing organization has read and is in compliance with all the Certifications, Assurances, and Representations, including that proposals must not include bilateral participation, collaboration, or coordination with China or any Chinese-owned company or entity, whether funded or performed under a no-exchange-of-funds arrangement.

(1) NASA is restricted from using appropriated funds to enter into or fund any agreement of any kind to participate, collaborate, or coordinate bilaterally with China or any Chinese-owned company, at the prime recipient level and at all sub-recipient levels, whether the bilateral involvement is funded or performed under a no-exchange-of-funds arrangement.

(2) Definition: "China or Chinese-owned Company" means the People's Republic of China, any company owned by the People's Republic of China, or any company incorporated under the laws of the People's Republic of China.

(3) By submission of its proposal, the Offeror represents that the Offeror is not China or a Chinese-owned company, and that the Offeror will not participate, collaborate, or coordinate bilaterally with China or any Chinese-owned company,

at the prime recipient level or at any sub-recipient level, whether the bilateral involvement is funded or performed under a no-exchange-of-funds arrangement.

(d) Offerors must ensure information and certifications required in SAM.gov are current at the time of proposal submission to ensure all eligibility requirements are met. Offerors must be registered at SAM.gov at time of proposal submission and at contract award, if selected.

(e) End-to-End Solution: Offerors must describe and demonstrate a complete end-to-end NEXUS solution that includes the space, ground, network, launch, integration, operations, cybersecurity, service-management, and user-interface elements necessary to meet the requirements stated in the SRD.

(f) Launch Vehicle and Deployment: Offerors must demonstrate a credible launch or deployment path sufficient to support the proposed NEXUS on-orbit demonstration schedule.

(g) Corporate Contributions: Offerors must show a corporate contribution that is directly relevant to the proposed overall effort.

The following entities are excluded from participation in this acquisition due to organizational conflicts of interest (OCI):

Table 3.1 Entities Excluded from Participation

Agile Decision Sciences	Amentum	ASRC Federal	CGI Federal
Bastion Technologies	Booz Allen	Broome Aerospace	Ignite Fueling Innovation, Inc.
Deloitte	DigiFlight, Inc.	General Dynamics IT	Sierra Lobo
N. Otte LLC	Peraton, Inc.	Resolution LLC	TriVector Service
Stellar Solutions	Summit Technologies and Solutions	Teltrium	Strategic Services
Barrios Technology	Victory Solutions	KODA Technologies	
Columbus Technologies and Services Inc.	Auburn University Applied Research Institute	GoLion	

3.2 Mandatory Qualifications and Experience

The Offeror must demonstrate that the proposed team, defined as the Prime Offeror and any proposed subcontractors, teaming partners, or joint venture partners whose corporate experience is cited, possesses credible, recent, and relevant corporate experience sufficient to support successful execution of the NEXUS effort. Additional details are in Section 4.4.4.

3.3 Administrative and National Security Policy and Procedures

Offerors must comply with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12). HSPD-12 applicability will be determined during award negotiations for the selected proposal(s).

NASA does not anticipate that access to classified information will be required for performance under this solicitation. Accordingly, a DD Form 254 is not included with this solicitation. Offerors must propose unclassified solutions that can be fully evaluated using unclassified information.

If an Offeror determines that classified information is necessary to describe or support its proposed solution adequately, the Offeror must clearly identify in the proposal:

- The specific elements requiring classification
- The proposed classification level
- A detailed justification for why an unclassified approach is not feasible

If NASA determines that classified exchanges are necessary during the evaluation process, then NASA will coordinate with the Offeror to establish appropriate security controls, documentation (including a DD Form 254, if required), and procedures. Any such exchanges will be conducted in accordance with applicable U.S. Government security policies and procedures. NASA reserves the right to limit, decline, or require unclassified alternatives to any proposed classified engagements or information if NASA, in its sole discretion, deems the classified engagements are not essential to the evaluation of the proposed solution.

4 Proposal Submission Information

4.1 Instructions

Proposals must adhere to the standards outlined in this solicitation. However, noncompliant portions of a proposal (e.g., sections that violate formatting or content requirements) will be identified and will not be evaluated, while the remainder of the proposal will continue to be considered. The Government will not reject an entire proposal solely due to such deficiencies; instead, the Contracting Officer will notify the Offeror of each identified violation and clarify which portions are ineligible for evaluation. Offerors are responsible for understanding and complying with the solicitation before preparing and submitting proposals.

For purposes of this solicitation, the terms “must” and “shall” are used interchangeably to denote mandatory requirements or obligations. Unless otherwise stated, both terms indicate actions, conditions, or requirements that are required for compliance with this solicitation.

Proposal submission questions will be answered and published in a Question-and-Answer log. Individual responses will not be provided. NASA will not provide evaluations, opinions, or recommendations regarding any suggested approaches or concepts. This Q&A log will be posted on SAM.gov and the NextSTEP website and will be updated periodically between solicitation release and the proposal due date.

A Prime Offeror must submit only one proposal, representing its best approach and best price for meeting the requirements of this solicitation. An entity that submits as a Prime Offeror may also participate as a subcontractor or team member on another Prime Offeror's proposal but must not submit more than one proposal as the Prime Offeror.

The proposal must describe a complete end-to-end NEXUS solution. The Offeror must provide a concise summary identifying how the proposed team will provide each required element, including space, ground, network, launch, integration, operations, cybersecurity, service management, and user interface. If any required element is provided by a subcontractor, teammate, partner, or other proposed team member, the Offeror must identify the entity, the role that entity will perform, and how that element is integrated into the overall NEXUS solution. Proposals that provide only partial or standalone technical capabilities will be determined ineligible and will not be further evaluated.

4.2 Proposal Submissions

Proposals must be submitted electronically through NASA's Enterprise File Sharing and Sync Box (EFSS Box). Hard copies will not be accepted.

4.2.1 Electronic Submission of Proposals – Proposal Marking and Delivery Through NASA's EFSS Box

The Offeror must submit its proposal electronically via NASA's Enterprise File Sharing and Sync (EFSS) Box, a FedRAMP Moderate authorized platform. Offerors must follow the detailed EFSS Box submission instructions located at:
https://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/other/EFSS-Box-Offeror-Proposal-Submission-Instructions.pdf

Proposals must be received no later than 10:00 a.m. Central Time on July 10, 2026. The link for proposal submissions can be accessed here:
https://nasagov.app.box.com/f/638211ee580d4c399ae76d8b203f01e3

Offerors that have not previously used NASA's EFSS Box are strongly encouraged to coordinate a test file submission no later than **ten (10) calendar days** before the proposal due date to allow time to resolve any access or technical issues.

The Offeror is solely responsible for ensuring the complete proposal is successfully uploaded and received by the Government by the deadline. Uploading files through EFSS Box may not be instantaneous. Offerors are strongly encouraged to submit at least 24 hours before the deadline.

NASA is not required to verify receipt before the submission deadline and is not responsible for any transmission or receipt failures.

All proposal files must:

- Be searchable;
- Not contain hidden formulas, hidden tables, or links to data not included in the electronic submission;
- Not be locked or password protected;
- Be free of viruses and malware;

- Not exceed 150 GB per individual file; and
- Be submitted in native electronic format whenever possible.

Scanned documents are permitted only when necessary, such as signature pages, prior award fee letters, or DCAA/DCMA approval letters.

Files determined by NASA to contain viruses or malware will not be opened or evaluated.

Alternate proposal submission methods are not authorized.

Offerors are encouraged to combine all proposal files into a single .zip file.

File names shall contain only letters, numbers, dashes, single spaces, and the period before the file extension. File names shall not include special characters.

Each file shall be sequentially numbered, clearly labeled with its contents, and include the Offeror name, solicitation number, volume number, and subcontractor name, if applicable.

Acceptable file name examples include:

Prime Offeror Submissions

1 - Offeror Name - Volume 1

2 - Offeror Name - Volume 1 Attachment 1

Subcontractor Submissions

1 - Offeror Name - Subcontractor Name - Volume 1

2 - Offeror Name - Subcontractor Name - Volume 1 Attachment 1

Subcontractor Submissions

Subcontractors may submit required proposal information separately through EFSS Box. The Prime Offeror remains responsible for ensuring all subcontractor files are submitted by the proposal deadline and comply with all solicitation instructions.

Post-Submission Actions

Immediately after the complete proposal has been uploaded, the Offeror shall email MSFC-NEXUS@mail.nasa.gov with a list of all submitted files by filename.

The electronic submission must contain all information required by the solicitation to be considered responsive.

4.3 Proposal Format and Contents

The proposal format and content requirements as outlined in this section below are the same for all volumes. Each of the required volumes of the proposal must be submitted as one searchable, unlocked file. Offerors must comply with the format and page limit requirements described in the table below. Attachments that are not specifically requested must not be submitted and will not be evaluated, if submitted.

Volume III of the proposal must be structured as follows:

- Priced Base CLIN 1, Concept Maturation and Risk Reduction (6 months)
- Priced option CLIN 2, System Integration, Flight Demonstration, and Capability Verification and Validation (up to 24 months)

- Priced option CLIN 3, Additional Demonstration, Anomaly Resolution and Service Validation (up to 6 months)

The Offeror's SOW will be incorporated to accurately reflect and measure the contractor's performance against the planned solution, deliverables, milestones, and work schedule for each CLIN, respectively.

The following page limitations are established for each portion of the proposal submitted in response to this solicitation.

Table 4.1 Proposal Submission Content

Proposal Section	Page Limit	Proposal Subsection	Excluded Items, Attachments, & Pages
Volume I- **Part I:** Transmittal Letter and Executive Summary **Part II:** Eligibility Information **Part III:** Mandatory Qualifications and Experience	20 pages	For overview contents, see Section 4.4	• Cover Page • Table of Contents • Transmittal Letter • Executive Summary • Launch Vehicle and Deployment acceptable evidence as defined in 4.4.3 (f).
Volume II - Technical and Management Approach	80 Pages	For volume contents, see Section 4.5	• Table of Contents • CASQ Attachment G • Statement of Work (provide all after the last numbered page)
Volume III - Price	No Page Limit	For volume contents, see Section 4.6	• Pricing Model Attachment J • Corporate Contribution Worksheet Attachment I
Volume IV – Contract Volume	No Page Limit	For volume contents, see Section 4.7	• Joint Venture Agreement, Mentor-Protégé Agreement, & Contractor Teaming Agreements • Model Contract Attachment H • Integrated Master Schedule • Organizational Conflicts of Interest Plan • Small Business Plan • Intellectual Property and Data Rights Management Plan

			• Corporate Contribution Worksheet Attachment I
Attachments must not be used to introduce new evaluation-relevant assertions that are not presented in the applicable proposal volume in order to circumvent page limitations.			

Submit all proposal volumes in Microsoft Office 2024 or later formats (i.e., Microsoft Word for narrative and Microsoft Excel for the pricing models). Offerors must not convert these volumes to .pdf format. Supplemental documentation provided as part of the non-page limited Price volume (e.g., financial statements, indirect rate letters, audit reports, letters of credit, disclosure statements, pre-award accounting system SF 1408s) may be provided in their native format (e.g., Adobe, .pdf). Offerors must not embed sound or video files into the proposal volumes.
Submit the contents of each volume per section 4.2.1 Electronic Submission of Proposals – Proposal Marking and Delivery Through NASA's EFSS Box instructions. Offerors must also ensure that each volume stands alone, provides complete coverage of the topic, and includes responses to each item described in the volume instructions.

Establish a page numbering convention for all volumes except for the Contract volume which must be numbered as provided for in the Model Contract Attachment H.

Provide a table of contents for each volume, with the exception of the Contract volume, for ready reference to sections and other proposal data (e.g., charts, tables, figures, illustrations, screenshots, pictures).

Instructions for page limited volumes:

- All pages must be consecutively numbered, starting with "1" (one) on the first page of each volume with the exception of the cover page, table of contents, executive summary, and the transmittal letter. Offerors must number these pages using Roman numerals (i.e., [i, ii, iii]) in order to differentiate these pages from the page limited pages which starts with "1."
- Each page, regardless of whether it contains proposal material or left blank, will be counted as a page.
- The standard page size must be 8½" x 11" with at least one-inch margins set on all sides (i.e., Microsoft Word, Layout, Margins, Normal, 1") and the maximum page size must be 11" x 17." Page sizes larger than 11" x 17" must not be utilized. Pages larger than 8½" x 11" will count as two pages and be appropriately numbered.
- No material outside of the proposal volumes may be incorporated by reference.
- To minimize redundancy, Offerors may reference another section within that volume only rather than duplicate the information in more than one location. Offerors must maintain logical subject matter flow when utilizing references.
- Font style shall be Times New Roman, and the font size shall be not smaller than 12-point for all text including, but not limited to the documents listed within the "Excluded Items, Attachments, & Pages" column of Table 4.1 above, charts, tables, figures, illustrations, pictures, graphs, or other embedded objects. Any text determined non-compliant will not be evaluated; however, any remaining content will be evaluated. All text shall use normal

kerning (i.e., Microsoft Word, Font, Advanced, Scale 100%, Spacing Normal, Position Normal, Kerning for Fonts unchecked). All lines shall be no less than single spaced.

- Text for all narrative information must be left margin justified (i.e., Microsoft Word, Home, Paragraph, Align Left [Ctrl+L]).
- If a determination is made that any material on any page does not comply with the guidelines related to font, kerning, line spacing, or margins, the material will not be evaluated. Notification will be provided to the Offeror identifying any non-evaluated material.
- If proposal revisions are requested, separate page limitations will be specified in the Government's request for that submission.
- Pages submitted in excess of the limitations specified in this provision will not be evaluated by the Government and will be returned to the Offeror.

4.4 Volume I - Transmittal Letter, Executive Summary, Eligibility Information, and Mandatory Qualification and Experience

4.4.1 Transmittal Letter

(1) A transmittal letter prepared on the Offeror's letterhead. The letter must include:

(i) The name, address, and telephone number of the Offeror (and electronic address if available)
(ii) A statement specifying the extent of agreement with all terms, conditions, and provisions included in the solicitation and agreement to furnish any or all items upon which prices are offered at the price set opposite each item
(iii) Names, titles, and telephone number (and electronic addresses if available) of persons authorized to negotiate on the Offeror's behalf with the Government in connection with this solicitation
(iv) Name, title, and signature of person authorized to sign the proposal. Proposals signed by an agent shall be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office
(v) Acknowledgement of receipt of all amendments and identification of all enclosures being transmitted.
(vi)For both the Offeror and any/all subcontractors and/or joint venture (JV) partners, provide the following information:

(i) Name (if "Doing Business As," include primary name)
(ii) Address
(iii) Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code
(iv) Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number (see 2 CFR Part 25)
(v) Socio-economic status
(vi) Estimated/actual subcontract value for each proposed subcontractor at any level (i.e., 1st-tier, 2nd-tier, etc.) (see 13 CFR Subpart 125.6(a)(1)). For indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) acquisitions without a reoccurring requirement (e.g., annual mission), also specify the total anticipated assigned work year equivalents (WYEs) and the resulting percentage of total proposed WYEs for the first year for each estimated/actual subcontract.

(vii) Microsoft Word version utilized to prepare the proposal
(viii) Results of any internal procurement integrity investigation pertaining to the participation of ex-NASA personnel in proposal preparation activities which could have provided the Offeror with an unfair competitive advantage
(ix) Proposal validity period (see paragraph [c][3] below)
(x) Company acquisitions/mergers/restructure - If the Offeror is involved in an impending or already consummated corporate transaction such as an acquisition, or merger with another company, or restructuring, whether announced publicly or not, the Offeror must provide information to convey any potential impacts of that corporate transaction on its proposal and any subsequent contract that may be awarded. For purposes of this solicitation, a corporate transaction is considered consummated when it has legally closed. Offerors must disclose any such transactions consummated within the 12 months prior to proposal submission, as well as any pending transactions, and describe any potential impacts on contract performance. An impending corporate transaction is one that is reasonably expected to be consummated within 120 days after proposal submission and for which the Offeror has entered into a binding agreement or similar arrangement. Offerors must disclose such transactions and describe any potential impacts on performance. The following must be addressed:

A. The company's ability to perform contract requirements as specified in the solicitation
B. The impact to all resources required, including facilities, proposed for this effort
C. The transaction impact to the rates and cost proposed
D. Any impact on how small business will be utilized
E. Any impact on the total compensation plan, if applicable; and
F. Any impact to other aspects of the proposal (e.g., business systems, JV and/or mentor-protégé agreement, organizational conflict of interest plan).

Failure to fully address how the merger, acquisition, or restructuring will affect your proposal may render it ineligible for award under FAR Part 9.1. If such transaction occurs or is initiated after proposal submission, the Offeror must provide notice of the transaction to the point of contact specified in the solicitation.

4.4.2 Executive Summary

The Executive Summary must consist of an overview describing the Offeror's qualifications, proposed solution, and on-orbit demonstration for an end-to-end Ka-band relay service, including space, ground, launch, integration, and operations elements, that are backward-compatible for a minimum of fifteen years. The Executive Summary must provide an overview of the proposed effort that is suitable for release through a publicly accessible archive should the proposal be selected.

4.4.3 Eligibility Information

The Offeror must provide the eligibility information required by Section 3.1 in Volume I, Part II, Eligibility Information. NASA will determine an Offeror ineligible for award if the Offeror does not demonstrate a complete eligibility package. Therefore, to be eligible for award, the Offeror must document its eligibility to participate in this activity by submitting a signed statement certifying items (a) through (d) of section 3.1 as follows:
(a) All participating entities have applicable DDTC registration, authorization, or other required approval to receive and handle ITAR-controlled data, as applicable.
(b) All participating individuals are U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents, and all participating entities are U.S. entities.
(c) All participating entities certify compliance with the China-related restrictions, certifications, assurances, and representations applicable to this solicitation.
(d) The Prime Offeror has verified that its SAM.gov information is current at the time of proposal submission.

In addition to a statement of certification, the following instructions apply to items (e) through (g) of Section 3.1:

(e) End-to-End Solution: Demonstrate a complete end-to-end NEXUS solution that includes the space, ground, network, launch, integration, operations, cybersecurity, service-management, and user-interface elements necessary to meet the NEXUS requirements stated in the SRD.

If the Offeror relies on subcontractors, teammates, partners, or other proposed team members to satisfy one or more required elements, the Offeror must clearly identify each entity's role and explain how those elements are integrated into the complete proposed NEXUS solution. Proposals that provide only partial or standalone technical capabilities will be determined ineligible for award and will not be further evaluated.

(f) Launch Vehicle and Deployment: Identify the planned launch or deployment approach, including dedicated launch, rideshare launch, rideshare mission, hosted payload, orbital transfer vehicle, deployment partner, or other launch-enabling method. Address key schedule assumptions, payload integration considerations, rideshare or manifesting constraints, and major launch-related dependencies or risks. Provide evidence, available as of proposal submission, that the Offeror has engaged with or initiated coordination with a launch service provider, rideshare provider, launch aggregator, hosted payload provider, orbital transfer vehicle provider, deployment provider, or other applicable launch-enabling entity.

Acceptable evidence may include a letter of intent, memorandum of understanding, teaming agreement, preliminary launch service proposal, rideshare mission inquiry, launch provider correspondence, manifesting correspondence, hosted-payload coordination, orbital transfer vehicle coordination, deployment coordination, or other written coordination addressing launch feasibility, payload compatibility, integration considerations, schedule availability, or manifesting availability.

NASA does not require an executed launch contract, confirmed manifest position, or final launch arrangement at proposal submission. General marketing materials, publicly available information, or unsupported statements of intent are not sufficient.

(g) Corporate Contributions: The overall proposed effort is defined as corporate contribution s required for the proposed effort. Corporate contributions are expected to be in the form of direct labor, travel, consumables, or other direct in-kind contributions. Other reasonable forms of corporate contribution may include investments in special contractor facilities or equipment, tooling, or other private investment. Independent Research and Development (IR&D) as defined in FAR Parts 30 and 31, regardless of its stage of development, may be proposed as corporate contribution. Once accepted by the Government in an award instrument (e.g., a contract attachment), further development of that corporate contribution under the contract will be deemed to be required in the performance of the contract for purposes of FAR 31.205-18(a). However, when corporate funding is proposed and accepted for development or continued development, the associated development cost will be tracked and data rights will be allocated consistent with FAR 27.404-2 for cosponsored R&D activities (see FAR clause 52.227-14, Additional Purposes for Limited Rights Notices, Alternate II on the NextSTEP website). NASA expects proposals will have a mix of in-kind contributions to the proposed effort as opposed to claiming all corporate contributions based on prior investments.

State and local government contributions may be included with private corporate resources.

The value of participation by federally funded participants and/or the use of federal government facilities must be added to the price to the Government.

Criteria and procedures for the allowability and allocability of cash and non-cash contributions will be governed by FAR Parts 30 and 31, and NFS Parts 1830 and 1831. NASA reserves the right to have exchanges (outside discussions) with Offerors to make reasonable determinations regarding corporate contributions.

Failure to propose corporate contribution(s) directly relevant to the proposed NEXUS effort will result in the proposal being rated Fail and will not be further evaluated.

Offerors must demonstrate that proposed corporate contributions are directly relevant to the NEXUS effort and will be used to support execution of the proposed approach. Corporate contributions consisting solely of prior investments, without a clear commitment of resources to the proposed NEXUS effort, may not be sufficient to satisfy this requirement. Offerors should identify the specific contribution, describe how it supports NEXUS performance, provide the estimated value being contributed, and explain the basis for that value. All corporate contributions must be documented in Attachment I, Corporate Contribution Worksheet.

4.4.4 Mandatory Qualifications and Experience Information

The Offeror must provide the Mandatory Qualifications and Experience information required by Section 3.2 in Volume I, Part III, Mandatory Qualifications and Experience. NASA will evaluate the Mandatory Qualifications and Corporate Experience requirement on a Pass/Fail basis. This requirement will not be numerically scored and will not receive strengths, weaknesses, adjectival ratings, or past performance confidence ratings.

For purposes of this requirement, “proposed team” means the Prime Offeror and any proposed subcontractors, teaming partners, or joint venture partners whose corporate experience is cited to satisfy this requirement. This requirement evaluates corporate experience, not individual personnel qualifications and not corporate past performance ratings.

An Offeror must demonstrate that the proposed team has credible, recent, and relevant experience sufficient to support execution of the proposed NEXUS effort in each of the following areas:

- Space system development, integration, launch, deployment, operations, and mission support;
- Space communications, satellite communications, space-based relay, RF communications, telemetry, command, data relay, or comparable communications-service functions, including commercial or hybrid Government-commercial service delivery;
- Ground-network operations, mission operations, service management, user support, scheduling, monitoring, anomaly response, or comparable mission-service delivery experience sufficient to demonstrate the Offeror’s ability to support an end-to-end operational mission service environment; and
- Execution of work comparable in complexity to the proposed NEXUS effort, considering technical scope, integration responsibility, operational responsibility, schedule demands, mission criticality, service delivery, system-of-systems complexity, cybersecurity, regulatory coordination, or space-ground interface complexity.

For purposes of this requirement:
Credible Corporate Experience means the cited experience is clearly described, directly attributable to the Prime Offeror or a proposed subcontractor, teaming partner, or joint venture partner, and includes sufficient detail for NASA to evaluate the work performed, the entity’s role, scope, complexity, and results.

Recent Corporate Experience means experience that was performed or completed within the last five years before the proposal due date.

Relevant Corporate Experience means experience that is similar to the proposed NEXUS effort in technical scope, operational responsibility, mission-service delivery, system integration, schedule demands, mission criticality, or space-ground communications complexity.

NASA may consider the collective corporate experience of the proposed team, provided each entity supplying cited experience will have a meaningful role in performing the proposed NEXUS effort.

For purposes of this section, recent experience means performance that occurred within the last five years, including ongoing efforts. At least one cited example should include active operations, mission support, service delivery, integration, launch, deployment, or comparable execution activity within the last three years, where applicable to the proposed NEXUS approach.

The Offeror may demonstrate this experience through the Prime Offeror, subcontractors, teammates, JV partners, or other proposed team members. If relying on a team member's experience, the proposal must clearly identify the role that entity performed on the cited effort and the meaningful role it will perform under the proposed NEXUS effort.

The Offeror should provide up to three recent and relevant experience examples. A single example may address multiple required areas. For each example, the Offeror must identify:

- Project or program name
- Customer or sponsor
- Period of performance
- Entity performing the work
- Role performed
- Capability delivered
- Required experience area(s) addressed
- Evidence of successful execution
- Relevance to the entity's proposed NEXUS role

Evidence of successful execution may include successful launch or deployment, completed integration, operational service delivery, mission support, customer acceptance, demonstrated availability, achieved data throughput, anomaly resolution performance, schedule adherence, or other relevant indicators.

The Offeror must include a simple mapping table showing how the cited examples collectively satisfy each required experience area. Because this requirement is evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis, lack of demonstrated experience, or inability to determine that the Offeror meets the requirement will result in a Fail and will not be further evaluated.

4.5 Volume II - Technical and Management Approach Volume

(a) Revised proposals may be requested only from those Offerors included in the competitive range.

(b) The Offeror's Technical and Management Approach Volume must be specific, detailed, and complete to clearly and fully demonstrate the Offeror's understanding of the subfactor requirements delineated in paragraph (d) below and the Offeror's approach to effectively and efficiently accomplish those requirements. Stating the Offeror understands and will comply with the requirements, or paraphrasing the requirements is not acceptable. In addition, statements such as "standard procedures will be employed," or "well-known techniques will be used," are not acceptable. Information must not be incorporated by reference.

(c) The Offeror must provide, at the beginning of this volume using the table provided below, a detailed compliance matrix that cross-references the Offeror's numbering structure and corresponding volume page number with all requirements associated with each subfactor delineated in paragraph (d) below. While discouraged, the Offeror may use its own unique numbering structure provided the compliance matrix provides clear traceability to each of the subfactor requirements described below. Note: The factors and subfactors listed in this table are **not** presented in descending order of importance.

As this acquisition is structured with a base CLIN and two option CLINs, Offerors must ensure that their proposed technical and management approach clearly addresses the distinct objectives, scope, and performance requirements of CLIN 1, CLIN 2, and CLIN 3, as applicable.

Table 4.2 Technical and Management Approach Volume Compliance Matrix

Solicitation Technical and Management Approach Volume Requirements	**Solicitation Numbering Nomenclature**	**Offeror Volume Numbering Nomenclature**	**Offeror Volume Page Number(s)**
Subfactor 1 – Technical Approach, Section (1) System Architecture, Design, and Technical Approach			
(i) End-to-End System Architecture Concept	Subfactor 1 - (1)(i)		
(ii) Operations Concept and Service Operations Approach	Subfactor 1 - (1)(ii)		
(iii) Requirements Compliance and Verification Approach	Subfactor 1 - (1)(iii)		
(iv) Backward Compatibility and Interoperability Approach	Subfactor 1 - (1)(iv)		
(v) Hardware and Software Technology Readiness Initial Assessment	Subfactor 1 - (1)(v)		
(vi) External Interface Definition Concept	Subfactor 1 - (1)(vi)		
(vii) Ground Infrastructure Concept	Subfactor 1 - (1)(vii)		
(viii) Resiliency and Fault Tolerance Concept for Continuity of Operations	Subfactor 1 - (1)(viii)		
(ix) RF Link Margin and Dynamic Link Budget Analysis	Subfactor 1 - (1)(ix)		
Subfactor 1 – Technical Approach, Section (2) Demonstration, Integration, and Transition			
(i) Demonstration and System Validation Concept	Subfactor 1 - (2)(i)		
(ii) Mission Integration and User Transition Approach	Subfactor 1 - (2)(ii)		
(iii) Transition to Service and Business Approach	Subfactor 1 - (2)(iii)		
(iv) Service Performance Monitoring and Reporting Concept	Subfactor 1 - (2)(iv)		
(v) Security Compliance Approach	Subfactor 1 - (2)(v)		
Subfactor 2 – Management Approach, Section (1) Execution Management			

(i) Commercial Strategy and Investment Structure	Subfactor 2 - (1)(i)		
(ii) NASA Engagement Plan	Subfactor 2 - (1)(ii)		
(iii) Definition of Technical, Schedule, and Price Risks	Subfactor 2 - (1)(iii)		
(iv) Supply Chain and Industrial Base Approach	Subfactor 2 - (1)(iv)		
(v) Overall Execution Schedule and Critical Path Definition	Subfactor 2 - (1)(v)		
(vi) Requirements, Configuration, and Technical Baseline	Subfactor 2 - (1)(vi)		
Subfactor 2 – Management Approach, Section (2) Regulatory, Security, and Sustainability			
(i) Regulatory Compliance Concept	Subfactor 2 - (2)(i)		
(ii) Spectrum Management and Frequency Coordination Approach	Subfactor 2 - (2)(ii)		

(d) The Offeror must provide a detailed response to each of the following subfactor requirements utilizing the structure and order as provided below:

Subfactor 1 – Technical Approach

NASA will evaluate the Offeror's Technical Approach for the feasibility, maturity, completeness, credibility, interoperability, operational resilience, and long-term service flexibility of the proposed end-to-end NEXUS solution, demonstration approach, and transition path. The Offeror must provide Technical Approach content aligned to the following technical capability areas, in addition to any other items required by the solicitation.

(1) System Architecture, Design, and Technical Approach

(i) End-to-End System Architecture Concept

The Offeror must propose an end-to-end service architecture, including the space, ground, launch, network, mission operations, and user interface elements, and how those elements work together to deliver the required NEXUS capability, including support for the latency, coverage, and data rate needs of legacy TDRS-compatible users.

(ii) Operations Concept and Service Operations Approach

The Offeror must describe how the proposed service will be operated (including scheduling data delivery and user interfaces), monitored, controlled, maintained, and supported during demonstration and follow-on service operations, including routine operations, anomaly response, service management, and continuity of service.

(iii) Requirements Compliance and Verification Approach

The Offeror must propose to meet all applicable performance, functional, interface, compatibility, operational, and service requirements, including the methods by which compliance will be verified and validated.

(iv) Backward Compatibility and Interoperability Approach

The Offeror must describe how backward compatibility and interoperability will be achieved and tested with legacy TDRS-compatible Ka-band users without requiring modification to customer vehicle onboard systems, including interfaces, acquisition and tracking considerations, and how compatibility will be demonstrated during testing and on-orbit validation. The proposed approach should also support future interoperability and integration opportunities with evolving Government, commercial, and hybrid communications-service architectures where practical and appropriate.

(v) Hardware and Software Technology Readiness Initial Assessment

The Offeror must describe the maturity of the hardware, software, payload, ground, and network elements required for the proposed solution, including heritage, new development, and any technology maturation needed to support successful execution.

(vi) External Interface Definition Concept

The Offeror must describe the key external interfaces required to support user integration, scheduling, service delivery, mission operations, and interoperability, including training emulator, interface boundaries, assumptions, standards, and the approach for maturing those interfaces.

(vii) Ground Infrastructure Concept

The Offeror must propose ground architecture and infrastructure, including ground stations, operations centers, network transport, data routing, mission support systems, and any other enabling elements required to provide the proposed service.

(viii) Resiliency and Fault Tolerance Concept for Continuity of Operations

The Offeror must describe the approach for ensuring continuity of operations through redundancy, fault detection, fault isolation, recovery, backup operations, graceful degradation, and protection against single-point failures.

(ix) RF Link Margin and Dynamic Link Budget Analysis

The Offeror must provide an RF link margin and dynamic link budget analysis sufficient to support NASA's assessment of the proposed system's ability to meet the applicable RF requirements in Attachment A.2 SRD, Service Requirements Document.

The analysis must address static worst-case and representative dynamic operating conditions across the proposed service volume, including key assumptions, input parameters, margins, limiting cases, sensitivities, and any conditions under which SRD RF requirements may be challenged.

The analysis must identify the applicable SRD RF requirements addressed and provide summary tables, plots, or other clear supporting information sufficient for Government evaluation.
The Offeror's analysis must be consistent with the content expected to mature under NEXUS-DRD-020, Radio Frequency Link Margin and Dynamic Link Budget Analysis Report (RF-LMDBAR).

(2) Demonstration, Integration, and Transition

(i) Demonstration and System Validation Concept

The Offeror must describe the proposed on-orbit demonstration and system validation concept, including how the demonstration will prove technical performance, backward compatibility, operational utility, and readiness to transition toward sustained service, as well as the proposed success criteria, evaluation metrics, and how the demonstration will reduce continuity risk.

(ii) Mission Integration and User Transition Approach

The Offeror must describe how Government users will be integrated, how compatibility will be validated, how interfaces will mature, and how users will transition into the demonstrated and follow-on service environment.

(iii) Transition to Service and Business Approach

The Offeror must describe the approach for transitioning from demonstration to sustained service, including the technical, operational, interoperability, continuity, and commercial business elements needed to support scalability, sustainment, mission assurance, and long-term service delivery. The response must address how the proposed approach supports a successful and economical relay capability with commercially sustainable spacecraft design, production, deployment, and operations; supports NASA mission needs and long-term relay continuity; preserves appropriate interoperability and operational assurance mechanisms; maintains sufficient architectural and operational flexibility to support future service evolution, integration, and competition; and enables service scalability beyond NASA for other Government or authorized mission users, as applicable, without providing or implying commercial access to NEXUS Ka-band frequencies reserved for Government mission use.

(iv) Service Performance Monitoring and Reporting Concept

The Offeror must propose how service performance, availability, operational health, outages, and other relevant service metrics will be monitored, measured, and reported during demonstration and transition to service.

(v) Security Compliance Approach

The Offeror must propose the cybersecurity and system security approach for protecting mission data, command and control functions, networks, ground facilities, interfaces, supply chain elements, and operational environments in accordance with applicable NASA and Federal requirements. Complete the attached CASQ (Attachment G).

Subfactor 2 – Management Approach

The Management Approach must include content aligned to the following management capability areas:

(1) Execution Management

(i) Commercial Strategy and Investment Structure

The Offeror must propose an approach for a scalable, sustainable, interoperable, and evolvable Ka-band backward-compatible relay service that meets NASA's near-term continuity needs and provides a credible path to long-term sustained service. The proposed strategy must leverage commercial capabilities, infrastructure, investment, business practices, and operational approaches while aligning the Offeror's delivery model with NASA's mission assurance priorities. The proposed approach should avoid unnecessary Government dependence on proprietary architectures, interfaces, operational constructs, or single-provider ecosystem constraints that could limit future competition, integration flexibility, operational resilience, or long-term service continuity. Offerors must explain how the proposed approach supports efficient development, demonstration, sustained operations, competitive pricing, and scalability to other Government or authorized mission users, as applicable. Offerors are not required to propose final sustained-service contract terms, pricing commitments, or business arrangements beyond the information requested by this solicitation.

(ii) NASA Engagement Plan

The Offeror must propose a NASA engagement approach that provides appropriate Government insight into technical progress, requirements closure, risk management, integration readiness, verification status, demonstration planning, anomaly resolution, and operational readiness. The approach must identify key reviews, technical interchange meetings, data access points, test events, and decision gates where NASA engagement is needed to support informed Government decision-making. The proposed engagement approach must support Government insight and decision-making without relying on Government direction of the Contractor's internal design or business operations. The Offeror should describe how NASA will maintain sufficient operational insight, technical visibility, interface access, performance transparency, and mission-assurance awareness throughout development, demonstration, and service delivery to support informed

Government decision-making, interoperability assessment, continuity planning, and future service transition considerations.

(iii) Definition of Technical, Schedule, and Price Risks

The Offeror must propose a risk management approach that identifies, assesses, tracks, and mitigates technical, schedule, integration, launch, regulatory, cybersecurity, operational, and service-transition risks. The approach must provide NASA with visibility into risk status, mitigation effectiveness, emerging risks, and decision points where Government awareness or action may be required.

Identify and describe the principal risks (technical, schedule, supply chain, integration, launch, regulatory, cybersecurity, operational, service-transition, interoperability, and continuity) associated with the proposed solution, including initial mitigation and risk retirement plans.

(iv) Supply Chain and Industrial Base Approach

The Offeror must describe the key suppliers, long-lead items, industrial base dependencies, and supply chain constraints associated with the proposed solution, including sourcing, production, obsolescence, and supply chain resilience.

(v) Overall Execution Schedule with Critical Path Definition

The Offeror must describe the integrated execution schedule, including major activities, milestones, dependencies, long-lead items, launch and regulatory dependencies, demonstration milestones, decision points, and the critical path supporting successful execution. The schedule must identify the planned timing for launch/deployment as applicable, orbit insertion, checkout, commissioning, ATC, Government user connection, start and completion of the minimum 30-calendar-day on-orbit performance measurement period, data review, performance validation, and Demonstration Performance Validation Review.

The Offeror may propose additional payment milestones and associated deliverables, provided such milestones are fully defined within the SOW, include clear acceptance criteria, and support traceable verification of progress toward the required NEXUS capability. Any proposed additional milestones must be structured to align with the applicable CLIN scope, contribute meaningfully to contract execution visibility, and be subject to Government review and approval.

The schedule must explain how the proposed approach achieves ATC and preserves the minimum 30-calendar-day on-orbit performance measurement period within CLIN 2. Offerors may propose accelerated schedules where credible and supported by technical maturity, launch/deployment readiness, ground readiness, user-integration planning, and schedule risk mitigation.

(vi) Requirements, Configuration, and Technical Baseline Management Approach

The Offeror must describe the approach for managing requirements allocation, interface maturation, design evolution, configuration control, and technical baseline development across the effort.

(2) Regulatory, Security, and Sustainability

(i) Regulatory Compliance Concept

The Offeror must describe the regulatory compliance approach for the proposed on-orbit demonstration and any subsequent transition to sustained operational relay service. The proposal must identify all applicable regulatory, licensing, spectrum, cybersecurity, export control, mission authorization, operational approval, and other compliance requirements associated with the proposed NEXUS architecture and demonstration approach.

Offerors must identify the current status, planned path, key assumptions, dependencies, constraints, risks, and schedule drivers associated with obtaining or maintaining required approvals. The response must address how the Offeror will manage regulatory compliance across the proposed space, ground, network, operations, user-interface, and service-management elements of the NEXUS capability.

Offerors must also describe any regulatory or compliance risks that could affect demonstration readiness, Authority to Connect, Government user connection, on-orbit operations, data delivery, service availability, or transition to sustained operational service, along with the proposed mitigation approach.

(ii) Spectrum Management and Frequency Coordination Approach

Offerors must describe spectrum management and frequency coordination for all aspects of the proposed solution other than the Government-provided SSL Ka-band spectrum, including licensing strategy, filing status, domestic and international coordination as applicable, coordination with other operators, interference mitigation, and long-term spectrum sustainability considerations. The NEXUS Ka-band spectrum for scientific research will not be made available for external commercial use.

4.6 Volume III - Price Volume

For the purposes of the Price Volume instructions, the term “Offeror” refers exclusively to the Prime Offeror. The term “Subcontractor,” as used in this section, includes any supplier, distributor, vendor, firm, or consultant (including any parent or affiliate entity) other than the Prime Offeror that proposes to furnish, or furnishes, supplies, materials, equipment, or services of any kind under the prime contract or any subcontract issued in support of the prime contract.

Offerors and all significant subcontractors are required to submit a complete Price Volume. Price information for non-significant subcontractors (valued at less than $20 million) shall be submitted within the Offeror's Price Volume using the Prime's required formats. The Offeror shall separately identify and break out each non-significant subcontractor within its submission.

Significant Subcontractor Information: For the purposes of this acquisition, a significant subcontractor is defined as any entity whose total proposed price is $20 million or greater. Each significant subcontractor is required to provide a complete price breakdown, including completion of Tab 3_Cost_Info_by CLIN within the pricing model (Attachment J). Significant subcontractors must also submit a cost narrative (BOE) prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in this solicitation.

Non-proprietary significant subcontractor information must be submitted as part of the Offeror's proposal. Due to the proprietary nature of certain pricing data, significant subcontractors may submit their required information directly to NASA.

Non-Significant Subcontractor Information: All non-significant subcontractors must be separately identified in the Offeror's pricing forms, and the Offeror must describe the scope and level of support to be provided by each non-significant subcontractor within the narrative BOE.

Overall Pricing and BOE Requirements: Offerors must describe their pricing approach, including key assumptions, major cost drivers, Basis-of-Estimate rationale, material dependencies, and the proposed pricing structure in sufficient detail to enable NASA to assess completeness and reasonableness.

Offerors must provide separate proposed pricing for each CLIN, including distinct pricing for CLIN 2 and the optional CLIN 3 demonstration extension and service-validation.

General Instructions

The Price section must include both a price narrative and the completed Attachment I: Corporate Contribution Worksheet and Tab 6 of Attachment J, Pricing Model. Any corporate contribution that affects a CLIN's cost must be fully reflected in the proposed CLIN price in Tab 1 and Tab 3 of Attachment J, Pricing Model. The narrative must clearly explain how contributions were applied, and the pricing model must show those impacts mathematically and consistently across all CLINs. The Offeror must address the price impacts stemming from the listed price drivers and assumptions in Column A of Tab 5 of Attachment J, Pricing Model. The Offeror must prepare the Price Volume consistent with the Offeror's current accounting system. An Offeror's failure to comply with all Price Volume instructions and the Instructions Tab of the Attachment J, Pricing Model (including those for electronic submissions) may result in rejection of the proposal. The price narrative must explain, in detail, all pricing and estimating techniques for the effort and corporate contributions.

The Offeror must complete the attachments applicable to the Prime Offeror, including subcontractor pricing. Each significant subcontractor must complete the applicable attachments

in the native format, as indicated above. The Offeror and its subcontractors must comply with the instructions contained in the pricing model and this solicitation.

All formulas used in the Pricing Model, Attachment J, must be clearly visible in the individual cells and verifiable. While links among worksheets are anticipated, the use of external links (to source data not provided in the workbook) is prohibited. The completed Attachment J must not contain macros or hidden cells. Attachment J and any supporting price information provided, must not be locked, protected, or secured by passwords.

Attachment J must represent a fully integrated pricing strategy to include all subcontractors (significant and non-significant).

4.7 Volume IV - Contract Volume

Joint Venture Agreement - If the Offeror is a JV, the Offeror must provide a complete copy of the JV agreement signed by all parties. (See 13 CFR §121.103[h]).

Mentor-Protégé Agreement - If the Offeror will be performing any part of this effort pursuant to an SBA approved mentor-protégé agreement, the Offeror must provide a copy of this agreement along with a copy of the SBA approval letter. For Offerors proposing as a mentor-protégé JV, an SBA approved mentor-protégé agreement must be in place prior to submitting an offer in order for the JV to receive exclusion from affiliation (See 13 CFR §121.103[b][6] and 13 C.F.R. §125.9[d][1][i]).

Contractor Teaming Agreements - If the Offeror has entered into a teaming agreement with any other party for the purposes of this solicitation, the Offeror must provide a copy of each such agreement. If the Offeror enters into such an agreement after submission of the offer, the Offeror must provide a copy of the agreement prior to the agreement becoming effective. Additionally, the Offeror must identify any teaming agreements which are exclusive and, for each such agreement, thoroughly explain how the agreement does not inhibit competition. The submitted information will be utilized, along with available market information, to ensure that the agreement does not have an anticompetitive effect on the acquisition.

The burden of proving that an exclusive teaming agreement does not have an anticompetitive effect rests with the Offeror. Anticompetitive impact, in addition to the assessment of other responsibility-related information required as part of this volume, is considered to be a matter of Offeror responsibility under FAR 9.103. Therefore, the Government may communicate with the Offeror outside of discussions to allow the Offeror to: articulate the procompetitive benefits of the agreement; address any concerns about the agreement's anticompetitive impact; and provide any additional requested documentation relevant to this determination.

Offerors are advised that proposals which include teaming agreements found to have an anticompetitive effect may be deemed ineligible for award under FAR 9.103. Additionally, contracting officers may be required to report such agreements to appropriate authorities as prescribed by FAR 3.3.

SECTION I

A Model Contract is provided in Attachment H of this Appendix. Offerors are advised that several sections and clauses are required to be filled in by the Offeror and submitted as part of the model contract with the proposal submittal. Sections designated with the text [TBD] stand for "To Be Determined." Offerors must not fill in the [TBD]s. The Government will update the TBD sections after contract award.

SECTION II

- **Exceptions:** The Offeror must explain any exceptions (including deviations and conditional assumptions) taken with respect to this solicitation. Any exceptions must contain sufficient amplification and justification to permit evaluation. Such exceptions will not, of themselves, automatically cause a proposal to be termed unacceptable. A large number of exceptions or one or more significant exceptions not providing any obvious benefit to the Government may, however, result in such proposal being deemed as unacceptable and the proposal being rejected. The Offeror must complete the table below if any exceptions exist. If no exceptions exist, the Offeror must insert "N/A" under each column.

Table 4.3 Exceptions and Deviations

Exception/Deviation	Rationale for Exception/Deviation	Solicitation Section/Page Number
e.g., Exception is taken to inclusion of clause 52.208-4, "Vehicle Lease Payments"	*e.g., This clause is applicable only to solicitations and contracts for leasing motor vehicles*	*e.g., Section I, Page I-2*

- **Corporate Contribution**: Offerors must document how they have met or intend to meet their proposed corporate contribution commitments under the contract, if selected, by submitting Attachment I, Corporate Contribution Worksheet, with its Contract Volume. The Offeror's Attachment J, Pricing Model, must document corporate contributions by CLIN and identify the associated value.

- **Small Business Utilization**: The Offeror must propose meaningful small business utilization by socio-economic category and percent against proposed value by CLIN. The Government is open to any meaningful proposed small business utilization goal the Offeror proposes so long as it is supported by the market and meaningfully stimulates the small business community. If selected for award, the Offeror's proposed small business subcontracting plan will be incorporated into the contract as an attachment in Section J.

- **Intellectual Property Concept**: In addition to assertions, an Offeror must provide an Intellectual Property Concept plan which describes its approach to intellectual property, data rights, software rights, interface documentation, and any anticipated restrictions or assertions that could affect Government insight, integration, validation, sustainment, or future competition. Offerors are encouraged to identify approaches that appropriately balance protection of commercial intellectual property with the Government's need for

sufficient operational insight, interoperability, mission assurance, continuity protections, sustainment flexibility, and future competitive access.

- **Integrated Master Schedule:** The Offeror must propose an Integrated Master Schedule (IMS) as part of its proposal. The Offeror must submit its IMS in accordance with NEXUS-DRD-019. The proposed IMS will become a Section J attachment to the contract, if selected.

- **Offeror Fill-Ins:** The Offeror must provide the documents specified in the table below, with all Offeror fill-ins completed.

Table 4.4 Offeror Fill-ins

Attachment	Attachment Title	Fill-in Required (if applicable)
H	Model Contract	All pages as applicable
K	Contractor Reps, Certs and Other Statements	Full Document returned

SECTION III

Offerors must provide the following plans in accordance with the associated Data Requirements Descriptions (DRDs) and applicable Section 4 instructions.

Table 4.5 Plans

Plan	Associated DRD (if applicable)
Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) Plan	NEXUS-DRD-016
Small Business Plan	N/A
Intellectual Property and Data Rights Management Plan	NEXUS-DRD-007
Integrated Master Schedule	NEXUS-DRD-019

For each NASA contract listed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Requirements Description (DRD) entitled Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) Plan, Section 15.3, Item "j," provide an industry or contracting officer point of contact (i.e., name, phone number, and email address). Subcontractor teammates may provide this information separately to the individual identified in MSFC 52.205-90, *Designated Point of Contact*.

Responsibility Information - Provide information specifically addressing each element under FAR 9.104-1 to demonstrate responsibility. An Offeror, at its option, may review information in SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that NASA previously entered.

5 Proposal Review Information

This competitive acquisition will be conducted as a highest technically rated, fair and reasonable price acquisition. Proposals must adhere to the standards outlined in this solicitation. However, noncompliant portions of a proposal (e.g., sections that violate formatting or content requirements) will be identified and will not be evaluated, while the remainder of the proposal will continue to be considered. The Government will not reject an entire proposal solely due to such deficiencies; instead, the Contracting Officer will notify the Offeror of each identified violation and clarify which portions are ineligible for evaluation.

The evaluation process will proceed as follows:

Step 1: The Government will review proposals to determine acceptability in accordance with NFS 1815.108-71, Identification of Unacceptable Proposals. Proposals determined to be unacceptable will not be further evaluated. The Government will also review for compliance with proposal preparation instructions as delineated in Section 4 and inform Offerors of all non-compliant material that will not be evaluated.

Step 2: The Government will evaluate proposals remaining from Step 1 in accordance with the Eligibility Information provision. Offerors determined ineligible will not be further evaluated. The Government will also evaluate proposals in accordance with the Mandatory Qualifications and Experience provision. Proposals receiving a Fail for Mandatory Qualifications and Experience will not be further evaluated.

Step 3: The Government will evaluate proposals remaining from Step 2 in accordance with the provision entitled Volume II - Technical and Management Approach Evaluation. In accordance with this section, proposals will be ranked highest to lowest total numerical score.

Step 4: The Government will evaluate the price reasonableness of the highest-ranked proposal(s) identified in Step 3 in strict accordance with the provision entitled Volume III, Price Volume Evaluation. The evaluation will proceed sequentially, continuing for additional proposals as funding availability permits. Any proposal for which the Government determines the price is unreasonable will be eliminated from further consideration.

Step 5: All remaining proposals after Step 4 will be provided to the Selection Official by the evaluators. The Selection Official will decide whether to make no award, one award, or multiple awards based on the factors described in Section 5.1.

If an award is made, the award(s) will be contingent upon the contracting officer's affirmative determination of responsibility in accordance with FAR Subpart 9.104-1.

5.1 Evaluation

The Government intends to evaluate proposals and make award without conducting negotiations. Offerors are therefore advised to submit proposals that reflect their most favorable terms. NASA

reserves the right to establish a competitive range and to include all, some, or none of the proposals in the competitive range. Should a competitive range be established, the Contracting Officer will provide formal notification to all offerors in accordance with the requirements of FAR 15.204-1.

At the Contracting Officer's discretion, NASA may conduct competitive negotiations consistent with FAR 15.204-2. In such an event, revised proposals may be requested only from those offerors determined to be within the competitive range.

VOLUME I – PART II ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

NASA will prescreen all proposals for compliance with requirements of this solicitation and the Omnibus and its subsequent Appendices, including the information required by Volume I, Part II, Eligibility Information. This includes submission of a complete proposal with all required elements. Proposals from Offerors determined eligible under the Eligibility Information requirements will be evaluated for compliance with the Mandatory Qualifications and Experience requirement.

A. End-to-End Solution

NASA will evaluate the End-to-End Solution Eligibility requirement on a Pass/Fail basis. This requirement will not be numerically scored and will not receive strengths, weaknesses, or adjectival ratings.

Pass: An Offeror will receive a Pass if the proposal provides sufficient information for NASA to determine that each required element is addressed, that the entity responsible for each element is identified, and that the elements are integrated into a single cohesive proposed NEXUS solution.

Fail: An Offeror will receive a Fail if the proposal does not demonstrate a complete end-to-end NEXUS solution.

A proposal will receive a Fail if it:

- Fails to address one or more required elements, including space, ground, network, launch, integration, operations, cybersecurity, service management, or user interface;
- Provides only partial or standalone capabilities;
- Does not identify the entity responsible for each required element; or
- Does not describe how the required elements are integrated into the overall NEXUS solution.

Failure to receive a Pass for this criterion will result in the proposal being determined ineligible for award and not further evaluated.

B. Launch Vehicle / Deployment Eligibility

NASA will evaluate the Launch Vehicle / Deployment Eligibility requirement on a Pass/Fail basis.

Pass: An Offeror will receive a Pass if the proposal provides enough information for NASA to determine that the Offeror has identified a credible launch or deployment path, considered major

schedule and integration drivers, and engaged with or initiated coordination with an applicable launch-enabling entity.

Fail: An Offeror will receive a Fail if the proposal does not provide enough information for NASA to determine that the proposed launch or deployment path is credible and reasonably aligned with the proposed NEXUS on-orbit demonstration schedule.

A proposal will receive a Fail if it:

- Does not identify a launch or deployment approach;
- Relies solely on general market availability, public launch provider information, marketing materials, or unsupported statements of intent;
- Does not provide evidence that the Offeror has engaged with or initiated coordination with an applicable launch-enabling entity; or
- Does not address major launch-related schedule, payload integration, rideshare, manifesting, or deployment dependencies.

Failure to receive a Pass for this criterion will result in the proposal being determined ineligible for award and not further evaluated.

C. Corporate Contribution

The Government will evaluate the Offeror's Corporate Contribution on a Pass/Fail basis. This factor will not be numerically scored and will not receive strengths, weaknesses, or adjectival ratings. NASA will not establish a fixed dollar threshold, percentage, or formula for determining whether a corporate contribution is meaningful.

Pass: To receive a Pass rating, the Offeror shall demonstrate that its proposed corporate contribution is directly relevant to the NEXUS effort and mitigates risk in the execution of the proposed approach.

The Offeror must identify the type, estimated value, BOE, source, and relevance of each proposed corporate contribution. Corporate contributions may include direct labor, travel, consumables, direct in-kind contributions, investments in contractor facilities or equpment, tooling, private investment, Independent Research and Development (IR&D), state or local government contributions, or other reasonable contributions that directly support the proposed NEXUS effort.

Offerors must propose corporate contributions directly relevant to the proposed NEXUS effort that support execution of the proposed effort and demonstrate the Offeror's commitment to maturing the proposed capability. Corporate contributions should not be based solely on prior investments. The Offeror must clearly distinguish proposed corporate contributions from NASA-funded work.

Fail: The Government will assign a Fail rating if the Offeror does not propose a corporate contribution, does not demonstrate that the proposed contribution is directly relevant to the proposed NEXUS effort, does not provide sufficient information for NASA to understand the contribution and its relationship to the proposed work, or improperly characterizes Government-funded resources, federally funded participation, or federal facilities as corporate contribution.

A proposal receiving a Fail rating for Corporate Contribution will be ineligible for award and will not be further evaluated.

VOLUME I – PART III MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

NASA will evaluate the Mandatory Qualifications and Experience requirement on a Pass/Fail basis. This requirement will not be numerically scored and will not receive strengths, weaknesses, or adjectival ratings.

Pass: An Offeror will receive a Pass if the proposal provides enough information for NASA to determine that the proposed team has credible, recent, and relevant experience in each required area and that the entities providing the cited experience will have meaningful roles in the proposed NEXUS effort.

Fail: An Offeror will receive a Fail if the proposal does not provide enough information for NASA to determine that the proposed team has credible, recent, and relevant experience sufficient to support execution of the proposed NEXUS effort. Because this requirement is evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis, lack of demonstrated experience, or inability to determine that the Offeror meets the requirement will result in a Fail; and a neutral rating will not be assigned.

A proposal will receive a Fail if it:

- Does not demonstrate experience in each required area;
- Provides cited experience that is not clearly relevant to the proposed NEXUS effort;
- Relies on experience from an entity that does not have a meaningful role in the proposed NEXUS effort;
- Does not provide sufficient information for NASA to assess recency, relevance, role performed, or successful execution; or
- Does not include a mapping table showing how the cited examples collectively satisfy each required experience area.

Failure to receive a Pass for this criterion will result in the proposal being determined ineligible for award and not further evaluated.

VOLUME II – TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT VOLUME EVALUATION

A NASA Evaluation Panel will evaluate proposals deemed compliant and eligible according to the evaluation criteria described in Section 5.1.

This volume evaluates the adequacy, credibility, and soundness of the Offeror's proposed technical approach and management approach and capability to deliver the end-to-end NEXUS relay service. The items identified by subfactor below should not be construed as a descending order of importance.

Subfactor 1 – Technical Approach

NASA will evaluate the Offeror's Technical Approach for the feasibility, maturity, completeness, credibility, interoperability, operational resilience, and long-term service flexibility of the proposed end-to-end NEXUS solution, demonstration approach, and transition path. NASA will evaluate Technical Approach content aligned to the following technical capability areas, in addition to any other items required by the solicitation:

(1) System Architecture, Design, and Technical Approach

(i) End-to-End System Architecture Concept

(ii) Operations Concept and Service Operations Approach

(iii) Requirements Compliance and Verification Approach

(iv) Backward Compatibility and Interoperability Approach

(v) Hardware and Software Technology Readiness Initial Assessment

(vi) External Interface Definition Concept

(vii) Ground Infrastructure Concept

(viii) Resiliency and Fault Tolerance Concept for Continuity of Operations

(ix) RF Link Margin and Dynamic Link Budget Analysis

(2) Demonstration, Integration, and Transition

(i) Demonstration and System Validation Concept

(ii) Mission Integration and User Transition Approach

(iii) Transition to Service and Business Approach

(iv) Service Performance Monitoring and Reporting Concept

(v) Security Compliance Approach

Subfactor 2 – Management Approach

NASA will evaluate Management Approach content aligned to the following management capability areas, in addition to any other items required by the solicitation.

(1) Execution Management

(i) Commercial Strategy and Investment Structure

(ii) NASA Engagement Plan

(iii) Definition of Technical, Schedule, and Price Risks

(iv) Supply Chain and Industrial Base Approach

(v) Overall Execution Schedule with Critical Path Definition

(vi) Requirements, Configuration, and Technical Baseline Management Approach

(2) Regulatory, Security, and Sustainability

(i) Regulatory Compliance Concept

(ii) Spectrum Management and Frequency Coordination Approach

Technical and Management Approach Rating and Scoring Methodology

NASA will identify strengths and weaknesses for the Technical and Management Approach Volume as defined below. Elements of the Offeror's proposal that merely meet the Government's requirements will not be eligible for either a finding of a strength or a weakness.

- Significant Strength: An aspect of the proposal that greatly enhances the potential for successful contract performance or appreciably exceeds specified performance or capability requirements in a manner that will be advantageous to NASA during contract performance.
- Strength: An aspect of the proposal that enhances the potential for successful contract performance or exceeds specified performance or capability requirements in a manner that will be advantageous to NASA during contract performance.
- Weakness: A flaw in the proposal that increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.
- Significant Weakness: A flaw in the proposal that appreciably increases the risk of unsuccessful contract performance.
- Deficiency: Any part of a proposal that does not conform to a material requirement of the solicitation. A material requirement is one that affects price, quantity, quality, or delivery, or that the solicitation requires to be met at the time of proposal submission.

Based on the assessed significant strengths, strengths, weaknesses, significant weaknesses, and deficiencies, each Technical and Management Volume subfactor will be assigned an adjectival rating and corresponding score within the applicable rating range. Adjectival ratings will be based on the evaluation findings and applied in accordance with the definitions below:

- Excellent (91-100): A comprehensive and thorough proposal of exceptional merit with one or more significant strengths. No deficiency or significant weakness exists.
- Very Good (71-90): A proposal having no deficiency and which demonstrates overall competence. One or more significant strengths have been found, and strengths outbalance any weaknesses that exist.
- Good (51-70): A proposal having no deficiency which shows a reasonably sound response. There may be strengths or weaknesses, or both. As a whole, weaknesses not offset by strengths, do not significantly detract from the offeror's response.
- Fair (31-50): A proposal having no deficiency and which has one or more weaknesses. Weaknesses outbalance any strengths.

- Poor (0-30): A proposal that has one or more deficiencies or significant weaknesses that demonstrate a lack of overall competence or require a major proposal revision to correct.

NASA will convert the adjectival rating for each subfactor into a numerical score which will be multiplied by the available points below:

Table 5.1 Technical and Management Approach Evaluation Points

Subfactor	Available Points
Technical Approach	700
Management Approach	300
Total	1,000

The numerical scores for each subfactor will be summed to arrive at a total point score for the Technical and Management Approach Volume.

VOLUME III – PRICE VOLUME

NASA anticipates adequate price competition for this acquisition; therefore, certified cost or pricing data is not required. In accordance with FAR 15.403-1, the Contracting Officer reserves the right to request data other than certified cost or pricing data at any time prior to award to support a determination of price reasonableness.

NASA will evaluate overall price reasonableness using the price analysis techniques described in FAR 15.404-1(b). NASA may consider the reasonableness of the price in relation to available funds, proposed CLIN pricing, proposed corporate contributions, milestone payment structure, and consistency between the proposed price, schedule, and technical approach.

In connection with the price reasonableness evaluation, NASA will assess the impact of the Offeror's proposed corporate contributions on price reasonableness. Offerors must include sufficient detail for NASA to assess the purpose, scope, timing, estimated value, source, dependencies, associated risks, credibility, and relevance of those contributions to the proposed end-to-end NEXUS service solution. When a corporate contribution directly affects a CLIN price, the Offeror shall clearly identify and quantify that impact in Attachment J to ensure full transparency and traceability within the pricing model. Corporate contributions will not reduce, modify, or otherwise diminish the Offeror's obligation to fully satisfy all solicitation requirements. NASA bears no obligation to reimburse, compensate, or provide post-award consideration for any corporate contribution, regardless of its nature or proposed benefit. NASA will also consider corporate contributions when evaluating feasibility, execution risk, and the credibility and sustainability of the Offeror's proposed delivery model, consistent with the established evaluation criteria.

PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS

(a) NASA, prior to making a Federal award for contracts exceeding the simplified acquisition threshold (SAT) (currently $350,000), is required to review and consider any

information about the Offeror that is in the Responsibility/Qualification Information accessible through the System for Award Management (http://www.sam.gov) (see 41 U.S.C. § 2313).

(b) The procedures for determining whether prospective contractors and subcontractors are responsible are set forth in FAR Subpart 9.1 and NFS Subpart 1809.1. Failure by the Offeror to affirmatively demonstrate adequate compliance with the general standards of prospective contractor responsibility at FAR 9.104-1, and any special standards established for this acquisition, will result in a determination of non-responsibility. As with all aspects of prospective contractor responsibility, a finding of non-responsibility can be made at any time prior to contract award. Per FAR 9.103(b), if the prospective contractor is a small business concern, responsibility will be determined in accordance with FAR Subpart 19.204, Certificate of Competency. If the prospective contractor is a Section 8(a) participant, see FAR Subpart 19.108.

(c) NASA will consider any comments submitted by the Offeror, in addition to information available in SAM.gov and the information required in Volume IV – Contract Volume, when assessing the Offeror's integrity, business ethics, and other responsibility-related information relevant to the risk posed by making a Federal award to the Offeror.

(d) Additional requirements for eligibility have been established for this acquisition. The Government may communicate with Offerors about the eligibility requirement(s) identified below outside of the evaluation process. This communication does not constitute negotiations. If the following eligibility requirements cannot be made acceptable to the Government, the Offeror will be considered ineligible for award:

(1) **Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) Plan**

(2) **VETS-4212 reporting compliance**. Except for contracts for commercial products or commercial services, or contracts that do not exceed the simplified acquisition threshold, contracting officers must not obligate or expend funds appropriated for the agency for a fiscal year to enter into a contract for the procurement of personal property and nonpersonal services (including construction) with a contractor that has not submitted the required annual VETS-4212, with respect to the preceding fiscal year if the contractor was subject to the reporting requirements of 38 U.S.C. § 4212(d) for that fiscal year. If the Offeror cannot or will not correct any non-compliance, the Offeror will be ineligible for award.

(3) **Acceptable Subcontracting Plan**. In accordance with FAR 19.109(a)(1)(i), in negotiated acquisitions, each solicitation of offers to perform a contract that is expected to exceed $900,000 ($2 million for construction of any public facility) and that has subcontracting possibilities, must require the apparently successful Offeror to submit an acceptable subcontracting plan. If the apparently successful Offeror fails to negotiate a subcontracting plan acceptable to the contracting officer within the time limit prescribed by the contracting officer, the Offeror will be ineligible for award.

(4) **Intellectual Property Concept**

(End of text)

5.2 Selection

The designated Selection Official is Roger Baird, Associate MSFC Center Director.

If any awards are made, the Selection Official will make award determinations in sequential order, beginning with the highest-rated technical proposal for which price reasonableness has been verified. After confirming the availability of funds, the Selection Official will proceed to the next highest-rated technical proposal, contingent upon a positive price reasonableness determination. This sequential process will continue until the available budget is exhausted and/or NASA determines that additional awards are not prudent based on mission needs.

5.3 Personnel

NASA takes seriously its responsibility for ensuring that proposals are treated with the utmost confidentiality and are evaluated fairly and objectively without conflict of interest on the part of the reviewers. Therefore, it is NASA policy that NASA Civil Service personnel will be in charge of and direct all aspects of the review and selection processes, including the identification and invitation of peer review personnel, in-person monitoring of the deliberations of any peer review panel, and the adjudication of conflicts of interest that may be declared by panel personnel. Also, all non-Government reviewers are prohibited from making unauthorized disclosure of proposal information and evaluation materials and/or information.

Government employees who may be involved in the peer review process are bound by Federal statute and regulation not to make unauthorized disclosure of trade secrets and confidential commercial and financial information contained in proposals. (18 U.S.C. § 1908 and 41 U.S.C. §§ 2101–2107)

NASA may use contractor support personnel to provide technical, business, and investment expertise when evaluating proposals. Any support contractor involved in the evaluation process will be bound by appropriate nondisclosure agreements to protect proprietary and competition-sensitive information. By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Offeror acknowledges and consents to NASA's use of support contractors for the limited advisory and administrative purposes described herein. NASA may consider advice provided by support contractors on technical, business, management, and investment matters. Consensus evaluations, findings, scoring, adjectival ratings, and award decisions remain the sole responsibility and function of NASA personnel.

5.4 Process for Appeals

5.4.1 Ombudsman Program

The NASA Procurement Ombudsman Program is available as a procedure for addressing concerns and disagreements. The clause at NFS 1852.215-84, Ombudsman, is incorporated by reference.

5.4.2 Protests

Prospective Offerors seeking contract awards under this Appendix have the right to file a protest as defined in FAR 33.1. The provisions at FAR 52.233-2, Service of Protest, FAR 52.233-3, Protest after Award, and 1852.233-70, Protests to NASA, are incorporated into this solicitation by reference.

6 Award Administration Information

NASA is under no obligation to make any award in response to proposals submitted. NASA reserves the right to award all, some, or none of the proposals received.

6.1 Award Notices

At the end of the selection process, each Offeror will be notified electronically of its selection or non-selection status by the NASA Selection Official. Selection notifications and subsequent correspondence do not authorize performance to begin. Following the award of one or more contracts, NASA may provide informal feedback to any Offeror upon request. However, no formal "debriefing" (see FAR 15.301-1) will be provided.

For contract awards, performance shall not begin until the contract is signed by both parties. NASA contracting officers are the only personnel with the authority to award NASA contracts and obligate Government funds. Any costs incurred by the Offeror in anticipation of an award are incurred at the Offeror's own risk unless and until the Offeror receives a fully executed, bilaterally signed contract.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements: Award recipients must comply with Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-12, as applicable.

Additionally, award recipients that have individuals working under the award who need access to NASA facilities and/or systems must work with NASA program staff to ensure proper credentialing.

6.2 Post-Award

6.2.1 Use of Options

In accordance with FAR Subpart 17.2 – Options, this solicitation includes two option CLINs which will not be exercised at the time of contract award but will be evaluated as part of this initial competition as authorized by FAR 52.217-5, Evaluation of Options. NASA will exercise or not exercise option CLINs at the discretion of the agency, for one, multiple, or none of the contracts. The decision to exercise or not exercise any option rests solely with NASA. For any exercised option, NASA intends to provide notice and exercise the option CLIN without a performance gap, consistent with the terms and conditions of Attachment H, Model Contract.

Additionally, FAR 52.217-9, Option to Extend the Term of the Contract, has been included in the Attachment H, Model Contract. This clause is provided at the time of solicitation as notice to all interested parties. If circumstances arise and NASA determines additional time is required,

NASA may use this extension vehicle in the future. The extension is not required to be priced at the time of proposal submission.

7 Solicitation References

- NextSTEP Reference Website: NextSTEP
- www.SAM.gov
- Reference Website for NextSTEP-3 Appendix E: NextSTEP-3 E: Network Extension for User Continuity and Sustainability (NEXUS) Ka-band Backward-Compatible Relay
- NextSTEP-3 Omnibus
- NPR 8715.1, NASA Safety and Health Programs
- NPR 2810.1, Security of Information and Information Systems
- NPR 8715.3, NASA General Safety Program Requirements
- NPR 8715.6, Orbital Debris Mitigation
- US Government Orbital Debris Mitigation Standard Practices

8 Solicitation Attachments

Table 8.1 Solicitation Attachments

Solicitation Attachment	Title
A.1	Statement of Objectives (SOO)
A.2	Service Requirements Document (SRD)
B	Data Procurement Document (DPD)
C	RESERVED
D	RESERVED
E	RESERVED
F	Payment Milestones and Acceptance Criteria
G	Commercial Architecture Security Questionnaire (CASQ)
H	Model Contract
I	Corporate Contribution Worksheet
J	Pricing Model
K	Contractor Reps, Certs and Other Statements