ACQUISITION DIRECTORATE

DEPARTMENT OF WAR
WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES
1155 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1155

Control No. WHS- 2121-JA
July 22, 2026

SOLE SOURCE JUSTIFICATION UNDER FEDERAL ACQUISITION REGULATION (FAR) SUBPART 8.4, UPDATED PURSUANT TO THE REVOLITIONARY FAR OVERHAUL, GENERAL SERVICES ACQUISITION MANUAL / REGULATION (GSAM/R) 538.7104-3

1. **AGENCY AND CONTRACTING ACTIVITY:** The Department of War, Washington Headquarters Services, Acquisition Directorate, Office of the Executive Director for the Under Secretary of War, Personnel & Readiness.

2. **DESCRIPTION OF ACTION:** The proposed action is for a Firm-Fixed Price (FFP) task order to National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to assess the SkillBridge Program services as detailed in section 3 below. The order will be issued under their General Services Administration (GSA), Multiple Award Schedule (MAS), GSA Co. 47QRAA24D002L, NAICS 541611, Administrative *Management and General Management Consulting Services*. The anticipated period of performance is 12 months with an estimated price of [redacted]

3. **DESCRIPTION OF SUPPLIES/SERVICES:** The DoW requires the Contractor to provide an independent and evidence-based assessment of the SkillBridge Program, including its effectiveness, value, implementation, and contribution to broader workforce readiness and national security priorities. Through this effort, the Contractor shall assess how SkillBridge supports participant outcomes such as employment, stability, and placement into federal and Defense Industrial Base roles.

   The Contractor shall evaluate how the program can be better leveraged in coordination with tuition assistance and credentialing pathways and examine variation in implementation, access, partnership quality, and perceived value across stakeholders. The engagement shall identify barriers, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. It shall also provide recommendations to enhance transparency, policy coherence, and program execution and recommend approaches for improving outcome measurement and continuous monitoring over time so that DoW can better understand what conditions and pathways are associated with successful outcomes.

4. **CIRCUMSTANCES JUSTIFYING SOLE SOURCES:** *GSAM/R 538.7104-3(b)(1)(v), "A sole source or limited-sources justification for a Federal Supply Schedule order is permitted when a law expressly authorizes or requires that the purchase be made from a specified source".*

   This requirement is being issued on a sole sources basis in accordance with *GSAM/R 538.7104-3(b)(1)(v),* as Congress has legally directed the DoW to utilize NAPA for this specific mission to meet the required level of quality and expertise.

   The DoW requires NAPA to provide an independent and evidence-based assessment of the SkillBridge Program, including its effectiveness, value, implementation, and contribution to broader workforce readiness and national security priorities. Through this effort, NAPA shall assess how SkillBridge supports participant outcomes such as employment, stability, and placement into federal and Defense Industrial Base roles.

   National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) has been identified as the only source capable of performing the SkillBridge study base on the following reasons; NAPA was chartered by Congress under

Public Law 97-257 (April 10, 1984) as a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization to provide independent and authoritative advice to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the Government.

• *Congressional Charter*: Established by Congressional charter under Public Law 98-257, the National Academy of Public Administration is explicitly authorized to provide independent, nonpartisan advice to federal agencies, granting it a unique sole-source capability to conduct reviews such as this. The specific statutory authority is outlined in the Act, as follows:

> *"Section 17. SERVICE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES. The National Academy of Public Administration shall, whenever called upon by Congress, or the Federal Government, investigate, experiment, and report upon any subject of government, the actual expense of such investigations, examinations, and reports to be paid by the Federal Government from appropriations available for such purpose. Approved April 10, 1984."*

This nonpartisan review of the SkillBridge program aligns with NAPA's charter and fully satisfies the requirements of Section 17, based on the following:

• *Independence & Public Credibility*: This SkillBridge study requires a publicly credible, nonpartisan assessment of a program focused on personnel issues of transitioning service members. No commercial firm, academic entity, think tank, or FFRDC combines neutrality, trust, and mission specific credibility at the level required.

• *Required Access & Cooperation*: The Academy's neutrality and long-standing reputation make it far easier to secure voluntary cooperation from senior DoW officials, veterans' groups, public health experts, and civil liberties organizations. Other vendors cannot reliably obtain this level of access. The Academy's network of more than 1,000 Fellows also includes former senior leaders across defense, veteran affairs, and human capital communities. These one-of-a-kind trusted relationships and high-level connections enable swift and effective data gathering and analysis. Due to previous, similarly sensitive federal reviews, stakeholders are familiar with The Academy's process and are more willing to engage openly, which is essential for an AAR of this scope.

• *Unique Expert Panel Methodology*: Other organizations may convene advisory groups, but the Academy is the only organization that uses an Expert Panel model of this caliber. Academy Panels are composed of nationally recognized former Cabinet officials, Service Secretaries, Surgeons General, Inspectors General, senior OSD leaders, and other top-tier practitioners. No other organization can assemble a panel with comparable depth, neutrality, senior-level experience, and demonstrated success conducting reviews at this level of sensitivity and importance.

The DoW requires NAPA to evaluate how the SkillBridge program can be better leveraged in coordination with tuition assistance and credentialing pathways and examine variation in implementation, access, partnership quality, and perceived value across stakeholders. The engagement shall identify barriers, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. It shall also provide recommendations to enhance transparency, policy coherence, and program execution and recommend approaches for improving outcome measurement and continuous monitoring over time so that DoW can better understand what conditions and pathways are associated with successful outcomes.

Ultimately, the study seeks to help DoW better align SkillBridge with related workforce development efforts and strategic initiatives, including Project Patriot Pipeline, so the Department can more effectively support Service members, military spouses where appropriate, and other eligible participants in connecting military experience and training to mission-critical civilian opportunities.

Finally, NAPA is an organization with a combination of (1) Congressionally-chartered independence; (2) a 1,000-member network of former defense, health, personnel, and federal management leaders; (3) a proven, government-accepted methodology for independent expert panel reviews; and (4) the public credibility and institutional trust required to obtain candid cooperation and produce an authoritative AAR of this sensitivity in a timely manner that meets the Department's need for transparency, operational rigor, and lasting policy improvement. This effort requires not merely technical analysis and expertise, but it further requires an independent, publicly credible, and institutionally trusted evaluation of sensitive personnel and medical policy decisions, and NAPA can provide the required level of quality the Government is seeking at this time. NAPA is the only responsible source capable of fulfilling the requirement at the level of rigor, neutrality, and expertise required by the Government.

5. **BEST VALUE DETERMINATION**: The Contracting Officer determines this action represents the best value to the Government in that NAPA currently holds a GSA Schedule contract. In accordance with DFARS Subpart 208.470(d), the Contracting Officer will conduct a price analysis and utilize the technique at FAR Overhaul 15.404-1(b)(5) – Comparison of proposed prices with the Independent Government Cost Estimate.

   Additionally, NAPA has an extensive record of successfully performing complex, independent studies for federal agencies such as the Agricultural Research Service, Architect of the Capitol, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These engagements have consistently demonstrated exceptional quality, analytical rigor, and timeliness. NAPA's personnel include nationally recognized Fellows and senior analysts with substantial experience in federal management, organizational assessment, and policy evaluation. The combination of its established GSA contract vehicle, exemplary past performance, and highly qualified subject-matter experts ensures that the NAPA will deliver an objective, evidence-based unclassified final report authored by an independent Panel of Experts that meets the Government's requirements efficiently and credibly. Accordingly, the proposed acquisition offers the best overall value to the Government in terms of technical merit, cost efficiency, and mission alignment.

6. **MARKET RESEARCH:** The Government conducted market research to identify contractors capable of performing the required work. The market research included a review of GSA eLibrary and outreach to organizations with demonstrated expertise in independent policy research and evaluation. This market research identified several research entities with general capability; however, only one of the identified organizations currently holds a GSA Schedule contract that aligns with the labor categories and scope required for this effort.

   To further assess technical capability, The Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (OUSW(P&R)) coordinated with multiple non-profit independent research entities and solicited approaches, methodology, study design, and expertise from each. OUSW(P&R) then met, over a period of a week, held meetings with each potential research provider to review their proposed methodologies, study designs, subject-matter expertise, and organizational capacity. Following these engagements, the Department solicited further inputs on each potential provider's capability and capacity to be responsive to the Department's scoping for this effort. Based on the outcomes of those meetings and the follow-up information, in which study methodology, expertise, approach, design, were discussed, senior leaders from OUSW(P&R) met and concluded that while several non-Schedule entities possess general research capability, only NAPA offers the unique combination of a Congressional charter, government credibility, and nonpartisan independence necessary to achieve the primary objectives of the Department with respect to this effort. In addition to these unique qualifications, NAPA is the only organization with these attributes that also holds a GSA Schedule contract. Utilizing the Schedule enables the Government to access pre-negotiated terms, established labor categories, and pricing that significantly reduces administrative burden and supports timely award. Based on this market research, the Government determined that fulfilling the requirement

   Further, on June 25, 2026, the Government then posted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Sole Sources on

SAM.gov to notify industry of its intent to sole source the SkillBridge support services. The NOI closed on July 9, 2026, and receive no responses.

7. **OTHER SUPPORTING FACTS:** NAPA is an independent, non-partisan institution chartered by the Congress with the mission of assisting agencies with significant public management challenges and recommending timely actions. Since its establishment in 1967, the Academy has responded to numerous requests for assistance from the Congress and federal departments and agencies on issues of importance. Although Congress may commission studies directly, agencies are likewise authorized to engage NAPA for independent assessments within their functional areas. NAPA's membership comprises distinguished Fellows who are former senior executives, agency leaders, and experts in governance and management, offering unparalleled institutional knowledge and credibility. Because of its statutory authority, nonpartisan standing, and proven record of delivering objective analyses for federal entities, NAPA is uniquely positioned as the only responsible source capable of conducting the required SkillBridge Program consistent with the independence, rigor, and impartiality necessary to meet the Government's needs. Awarding this requirement to any other entity would compromise the integrity, credibility, and perceived neutrality of the study's findings and would not serve the Government's best interests.

8. **ACTIONS TO REMOVE OR OVERCOME ANY BARRIERS THAT LEAD TO THE RESTRICTED CONSIDERATION BEFORE ANY SUBSEQUENT ACQUISITION FOR THE SUPPLIES OR SERVICES IS MADE:**

   The Government recognizes the importance of promoting competition and will take appropriate actions to reduce reliance on sole-sources awards. The results of the NAPA's SkillBridge Program will provide critical insights and recommendations that will help define clear, repeatable study methodologies and performance standards. Market research will be conducted periodically to identify additional qualified sources capable of providing independent, evidence-based analysis of comparable scope and quality. The Government will engage with industry, academia, and other independent organizations to expand the potential competitive base for future analytical and evaluation efforts.

9. If this acquisition is for new work as a logical follow-on to an original Federal Supply Schedule (FSS), was the original order placed under the FSS ordering procedures?

   ☐Yes, the original acquisition was issued on a competitive basis.

   ☐No, a copy of the previous justification is attached. The actions to remove any barriers to competition cited on the previous justification ☐ were ☐ were not completed.

   ☒Not Applicable. This is a new requirement.

CERTIFICATION

I, hereby, certify that the supporting data under my cognizance included in this justification are accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

[redacted] _____ _____

Contracting Officer's Representative/Program Office Date

[redacted] _____ _____

Contracting Officer Date