



Whitepaper

Contracting Strategies for Network Modernization

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Commands throughout DoD are faced with an ever-growing need to replace their legacy TDM networks with modern digital infrastructure.

According to the DoD Digital Modernization Strategy,

“The promised benefits from cloud computing, big data analytics, mobility, IoT, increased automation, and cognitive computing can only be fully realized with a suitable network. Modernization of the DISN is necessary to improve performance, capability, capacity, agility, and security, while reducing cost and complexity. Greatly enhanced bandwidth capacity and increased network resiliency support use of DoD-wide services and consolidation of critical IT systems, applications, and services from local installations to core data centers and the DoD enterprise cloud environment.”



The first Strategy Element under Objective 8:

Modernize Defense Information Systems Network (DISN) Transport Infrastructure calls for Upgrading Optical Transport. The Air Force and Space Force have embraced that strategy and begun work to replace obsolete SONET-based networks with packet technology, but that effort is still in the early stages with much more work ahead.

The Air Force faces a number of challenges in following the mandate to replace TDM networks:

01 Modernization requires a substantial infrastructure budget

02 Contracting has been handled largely at the base and MAJCOM level and has not realized efficiencies possible from category management

04 Trained and certified staff are in short supply, leading to gaps in the ability to rapidly deploy and provide ongoing support

03 The need for bandwidth expansion is growing at an exponential pace and modernization efforts cannot keep up with the demand



Fortunately, there are several easily-implemented solutions to address these challenges and allow the Air Force and Space Force to meet the mandate for digital network modernization.

Rather than purchasing network infrastructure that can quickly become outdated, a Network as a Service (NaaS) consumption model can provide a way to mitigate the risk of obsolescence and modernize at a faster pace with less budget. This approach puts the requirement on the contractor to deliver bandwidth at the required levels using modern, secure technologies. The necessary security posture can be more easily maintained without requiring cyber resources that are in extremely short supply.

Combined Air Force/Space Force spending on optical network modernization over the last three years was in excess of \$30 million. The required products and services were sourced through multiple contract shops, using over 10 different contract vehicles. In one case, three phases of the same infrastructure project were sourced using three different contracts. When the necessary support services are factored in, a single project could involve five different contracting officers working with five different vehicles.

Estimated Budget Required for TDM Elimination

Air Force	\$45M
Space Force	\$30M
Army	\$57M
Navy	\$25M
Marines	\$35M
DISA	\$125M

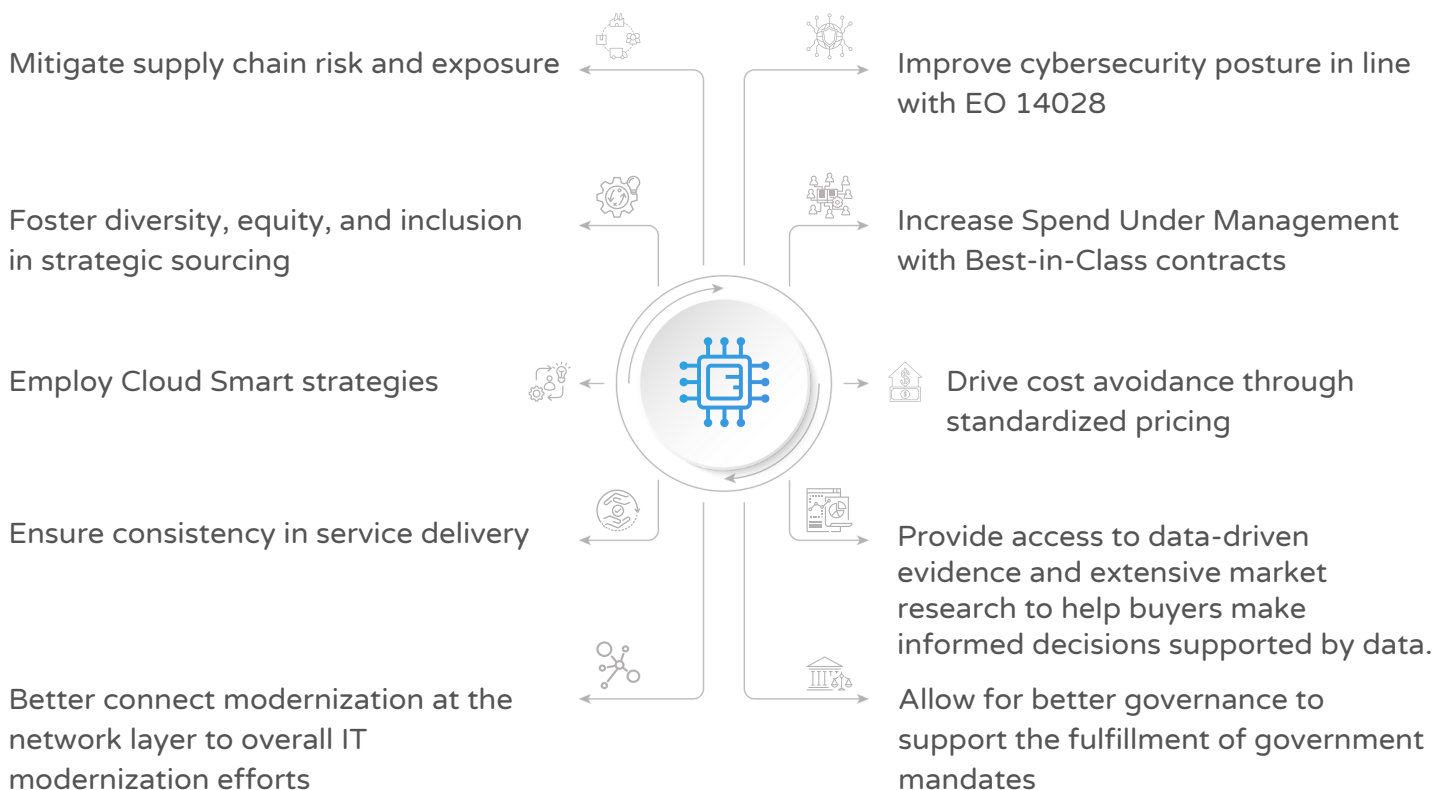
This inefficiency costs the government money, both in wasted manpower and lost opportunity for discounting at scale. The required products and services are commercially available and can be procured using Best-in-Class vehicles such as GSA MAS Schedule. The creation of a simple Blanket Purchase Agreement could offer the government a streamlined, cost-effective way to procure these solutions.

Alternatively, an Enterprise Agreement could be negotiated to allow the government to exercise its buying power at scale and achieve the maximum possible discounts through a consistent purchasing experience.

Focusing on the desired Mission Outcome will yield greater success than concentrating on the technology itself. While the need for modernization is a clear mandate, the ability to deploy, use and support modernized networks is the real key to delivering value. This requires trained and certified resources that can be difficult to find. Leveraging a BPA or EA to procure professional and managed services in addition to the technology itself allows the government a cost-effective and streamlined way to obtain all the critical components of a solution that can drive the desired mission outcome.

By transforming how the DoD buys and manages these products and services that each branch needs to meet their mission, precious resources can be redirected from common, routine procurements to complex, major acquisitions as outlined in OMB Memo M-18-23, "Shifting from Low-Value to High-Value Work". Instead of using separate, uncoordinated contracting efforts, applying the principles of IT Category Management would allow Government to reduce the number of costly and duplicative contracts, which are expensive and time-consuming for both Government and industry.

Applying a Category Management approach to network modernization efforts would help DoD:



Conclusions:

Creating a simplified acquisition method within AF that could be extended to the Space Force (and potentially to all of DoD) would enable the government to “improve performance, capability, capacity, agility, and security while reducing cost and complexity”. A BPA or Enterprise Agreement for Optical Networking that includes a Network as a Service option, professional services, and managed services will be the fastest, easiest way to achieve mission outcomes.

Our Team members serve as trusted advisors to Air Force decision-makers and can help explain how this strategy can add value to existing modernization efforts while maximizing cost avoidance. We can provide details on the business case, small business participation, technology solutions, pricing models, and service level agreements. We want to help and look forward to meeting with you to show you how.

