

STARCOM 21 Resurfaces

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The state of Illinois' **STARCOM 21** project that roared with controversy earlier this year has resurfaced once again. A lot of backlash resulted from STARCOM 21's \$114 million **soul-source contract to Motorola**, awarded in May, but that hasn't stopped the project from expanding. Illinois recently decided to contract out radio equipment compatible with the STARCOM 21 network through a new invitation for bid (IFB) released on September 13, 2011.

Initially, **Harris Corporation** filed a formal protest alleging the awarded Motorola contract was a monopoly and bypassed open competition between vendors. The STARCOM 21 network services more than 18,000 subscribers and is owned and operated by Motorola. The intention of the past state procurement was to allow continued use of the existing STARCOM 21 network in order to maintain infrastructure and leverage the original investment.

The new solicitation is looking to establish a statewide indefinite quantity master contract(s) for the purchase of STARCOM 21 compatible subscriber radio equipment (P25) along with associated installation, extended warranty, parts, and accessories for various state agencies, officials, boards and commissions. All radios must be **FCC** type-accepted and PC programmable. Proposals are due October 4, 2011. Vendors with equipment not currently approved for the STARCOM 21 network are eligible to bid, but must have the equipment approved to operate on the network after the award is posted.

Analyst's Take

With this contract being more equipment-based as opposed to infrastructure-related, this may be an opportunity for new vendors to gain the upper hand. It is likely that big-name corporations such as Motorola or Harris Corporation may not even bid on this contract. Although much controversy may not arise this time around, it is still important for vendors to thoroughly research before bid proceedings. Vendors should find out what most satisfies the customer and then properly gauge their pricing accordingly. Also, it is always important to be aware of protest procedures in the event a contract is deemed unfair.