

**Maritime Assault Suit System (MASS)
Assessment Event (AE) Virtual Q&A Session
28 September 2021**

Overview

Jonathan Rich: My name is Jonathan Rich. I'm the assistant program manager up at the program management office that has SOF-SSES. I report to Colonel Ha down at PEO-SOF Warrior (PEO-SW). And first off - thanks for taking the time, everybody, I know people are busy, so I appreciate the time to listen in and ask questions and your interest in the MASS Suit effort so I'm going to go through, just a few charts I'm going to share them on the screen now. I'll just go through the generic schedule that we have laid out for this and John, jump in if there's anything off that you see.

Right now we're still in Phase one, so the submissions are open, between now and 11 October, which is when the white papers will be due.

At that point the government will do an initial downselect and then send out invitations for the assessment event, which is scheduled for the second and third of November. And how we do that is still TBD whether it's going to be virtual or in person.

Phase four is the negotiation and prototype awards so we'll be looking for about 10 variants of each submission for a user evaluation.

We want to get those contracts or Other Transactional Agreements (OTAs) set up before Thanksgiving, by the 19th of November and then this winter, will be the operational evaluations, which is phase five, and that's roughly scheduled for February. It may shift a little bit to the left or right depending on when all the prototypes are delivered and then the end state of this is a long-term contract award.

And the estimated timeframe to award that contract would be May 22.

Overall, this is a maritime assault suit and a lightweight maritime assault suit being used by the naval special warfare command in maritime, land, airborne, shipborne, transitional environments.

Okay, so just to recap MASS/L-MASS - this is straight out of the statement of objectives that was on the website.

So, this is for the naval special warfare command and all environments: maritime, land, airborne, shipborne, and transitional environments, this is not a diving suit this is for surface swimming.

The language that we have in the same of objectives specifically said we want to keep the operator as dry as possible during surface swims, as well as when they're immersed in 10 feet of water for one minute that allows some of the boat drivers to dive under the boat to fix something or look at something, to do what they need to do underwater while not being soaked when they get back in the boat.

The suit has to be compatible with all the individual operator equipment so gloves, load carriage, helmet, anything that the guys are wearing.

And then lightweight, comfortable, breathable all that all that type of stuff to make it as really as comfortable as possible and allow for unrestricted range of motion while they're swimming, running, jogging, manipulating weapons, climbing all that stuff.

As far as weight and operational life, the MASS Suit is the more durable version at somewhere less than five pounds with a three-year life expectancy and the L-MASS at less than four pounds with a less than one- year life expectancy.

For sizing the target is the 5th-95th percentile males in then there's always an off case where we need some crazy size, and that we'd like to be available as well.

For configuration, there's a front zipper a relief zipper. Integrated socks and pockets that will be required on the suit in certain areas, and a lot of that, again, is in the statement of objectives. It needs to be easily on and off by an individual operator, so you don't need the buddy system to lock these zippers down.

I pulled this one out because it's one of the bigger complaints that we have is the comfort of the neck seal - we need it to be waterproof but as comfortable as possible. There needs to be a way to relieve the tension, when someone is not in the water doesn't need to be fully waterproof and it needs to be customizable so whether using the old latex seal that you can cut or some other version we're looking for something that's comfortable, waterproof, and adjustable.

And then for delivery, the objective is for a vendor to deliver up to 200 suits per month.

And then, if there's other questions or you need other specifics, they're located in the statement of objectives. I didn't want to go through every single one of them here, I wanted to leave more time to answer your questions.

Q&A Session

What metrics will be used to evaluate MASS and L-MASS proposals? And, how does a lack of prior DOD experience influence the scoring of these metrics? In other words, is it possible for companies that are new to the military to score a sufficiently high score to move forward?

Jonathan Rich: John, I'll give this a shot and then, if there's anything additional that you want to you want to add to it feel free to. For metric: technical performance so, how does the material solution fair during the user eval, and then cost and past performance /management.

And if you're new to the military contracts, it is, the short answer is yes it's possible. We just don't have as much information to make a past performance assessment on.

John Helfert: That's a great question, Mark and great answer, Jonathan, because it is going to be a little difficult to evaluate your previous performance and stuff like that, but the whole intent of the OTA is to bring in new vendors that may not traditionally do business with the government.

So, if you got, you know, a kick ass product and the users like it, the program office likes it, it's not going to kick you out of the competition because you've never had a contract before.

Do interested parties need to do anything other than join the ecosystem to participate in the event?

Yes, please go to <https://events.sofwerx.org/mass/>, scroll down to the bottom and click the submission link. This is where you submit your white paper. White Paper Template is linked for reference. Submissions are due NLT 11 October.

What level of government registration is required to respond? (eg: SAM, Cage Code, other?)

Jonathan Rich: Although it's an OTA, you still have to be registered in Sam to receive an award from the government. Okay, so if you do have a product and you're not registered what I would highly suggest if you plan on submitting is contacting a small business REP and getting registered in Sam as soon as possible. They can rush these I've seen them get done in anywhere

from 30 to 90 days, so I think that would kind of answer the question from Mark about what level of government registration is required.

In Table 1 of SOO, it is noted the "Material must be Berry Amendment Compliant". Would TAA compliant solutions be acceptable?

It is an OTA, I'm not familiar with the Trade Agreement Act as far as how that would apply to this particular requirement. However, I'd like to go back to my legal team and ask them about that. I would say that 99.9% that something needs to be Berry Amendment Compliant. However, it could be different with the OTA and you could get by with a Trade Agreement Act but I'll definitely check with legal and get that answer back out to whoever asked that question.

Is there a specific requirement on the type of material the solution is made from? i.e.

Neoprene, Rubber, or Nylon

Jonathan Rich: Short answer is no, just have to be Berry Amendment Compliant or John is going to look into the TAA compliance.

OTA: When is the appropriate time to share details on related existing technologies, current development projects and future technology roadmaps?

Jonathan Rich: For this immediate requirement, you need something that's commercially available so submit the White Paper in response to the current requirement and what you have available, and then, if, after the down select, you're invited to the assessment event, I'd say at that point we can talk about what future technologies may be incorporated into the MASS / L-MASS. I think at this point we're trying to find something that fits in immediate need.

John Helfert: You know, you have the opportunity with the OTAs once we get to the assessment event or when we're looking at White Papers, if you're interested in something you're more than welcome to pick up the phone, you can have communications with vendors prior to. It's more of an open dialect versus a standard bar type contract. So it gives you the flexibility to be able to communicate with vendors, I mean obviously you don't want to go out and, you know, be talking a bunch of different projects for this one.

Jonathan Rich: This isn't a development effort, this is something we're looking for existing cost or modified cost solutions. Because it's not development and, but we are interested in what you're doing in the future.

When will it be determined if the AE will be in-person or virtual? Our preference is in-person.

Jonathan Rich: That's my preference, too. But I know there are restrictions on who can fly and where. At this point, that's TBD. When will it be determined - as soon as possible, we're in the September right now, I'll have conversations with SOFWERX and some of the other stakeholders to see who can get down to Tampa.

I'd like to say it'll be before the initial down select because you'll need to know for the assessment event.

Could you provide any additional insight on what the primary determining factors, in order of weighting, will be to determine the next MASS/L-MASS solution(s) will be?

Jonathan Rich: Based on discussions with our stakeholders, the technical material solution is the most important, followed by the cost, and then past performance, in that order.

SOO 7: If a new colorway is chosen for the MASS / LMASS from previous versions will the government work with the supplier on long lead items as the supply chain may not be prepared to deliver material in the required 90-120 day window.

Jonathan Rich: The short answer yes - we understand the lead times and manufacturing delays and COVID delays and all that, so, we'll work with you on it.

Table 1 : In regard "minimize the wearer's signature when viewed visually (unaided) or through Visual Augmentation Sensors (VAS)".

Upon award will the government engage in defining the spectrum to be defeated and test sample materials for use? This will include material, zippers, findings etc.

Jonathan Rich: We're trying to reduce the signature across all spectrums. There's camouflage patterns that are developed and designed to cause break up in different environments. Those patterns are available, or should be available for use in the MASS Suit. Will we engage in defining the spectrum to be defeated? We can supply information that will give you information on what those metrics are that we have used in the past. So it would give you those reflectance and different wavelengths that we're trying to meet. That would give you the opportunity to at least try to find a material or material supplier, that would be able to meet those specs. Will that include material zippers findings, etc? Those specs would cover anything in that any material use, so it wouldn't change the specification for reflectance wouldn't change, whether it was a zipper or a pocket.

OTA Phase 4: Since the color(s) for the suits has not been defined, if down selected to Phase 4 can the sample colors be at the contractor's discretion while color and spectrum analysis of the base material is sourced?

Jonathan Rich: The final material is not available in time for user evaluation, can you substitute in a material to use or a color that's readily available that wouldn't be produced in time for a user evaluation? I don't think that's a problem to Jomar, Jim, or Jeff – do you guys have any issue if the material, color, or pattern for the user EVAL is different than the final deliverable? So, if they could get a color black in time for the user EVAL but that's not ultimately what the submission will be, is that going to be an issue?

Jomar Cruz: No it's not an issue. As long as it's not bright orange or something like that.

Jonathan Rich: I know some of the materials have longer lead times and trying to get sample materials to build 10 of one variant might be tough, or it might be delayed, so if they were able to get a different color in time for an evaluation.

John Helfert: I would agree with what Jomar said, as long as it's not a bright orange or you know something like that, I mean we really don't have it, it has not been defined, yet, so I can't really hold somebody to it, I know Phase four is a ways down the way, but if somebody's having troubles getting something, but if they're bringing a concrete product. That is, you know is have the same type of material, maybe a different color that's good to go, I mean I don't you know I don't see an issue with that, as long as they can get it before you know, the end of the process.

OTA: Is the desired result of this OTA some form of supply contract?

If yes, could you provide some information on what that supply contract might look like and for how long it might be?

Can you define the process on how the OTA process evolves into a supply contract?

Jonathan Rich: I can answer some of that, John, and then I might need you to chime in. The intent, at the end of this, is to enter into a minimum five-year contract. And based on previous contracts for the same items, the last five years, we purchased somewhere between 5,000-5,500 suits total. So that kind of gives you a scope of what the end state is and what we've purchased in the past. That's, not to say that that'll be the exact numbers when we go forward

with the next one, but that's historically what we've done. And, then, can you define the process on how the octa process evolved into supply contract that John can you jump in on that.

John Helfert: Yeah so the way we have this thing laid out, we have it in phases, if you make it through the phase, at the end of it we're going to select the best suit that meets the government's requirement. From there, it will either be a FAR-based follow-on contract or an OTA follow-on contract, but we have not made that decision yet, but it's flexible, it just depends.

Jonathan Rich: We reserve the flexibility to award, there may be multiple contracts or agreements set up as a result of this, so we want to make sure we get the best MASS Suit and the best L-MASS Suit that we can get so that might mean multiple contracts. And there's no restriction, at least from my standpoint, on how many variants you want to submit, so if you have a couple different versions you think meet the requirement, we want to take a look at both of them. At least through the assessment event just to have a look at what what's available.

Is the delivery requirement 200 suits total per month or 200 of each suit per month (400/month) total?

Jonathan Rich: 200 total. So, if we order 1000 suits, we would be trying to get 200 a month, whether it's the MASS or L-MASS, so 200 total is the objective per month.

Does the device have a use case where we can anticipate how much emphasis will be on ship/land versus in-water (swim or work)? Is there a maximum swim distance to be targeted?

Jomar Cruz: No, because the SWCs will use it mostly on boats and the Seals will use the OTD. No, there's no percentage. It depends on what they're doing.

It was mentioned this is NOT a development type award. However, there are required OTS changes/modifications/supply chain management in order to deliver the solution. Is there any engineering/prototyping/testing budget leading up to the Phase V supply contract?

Jonathan Rich: We have the funds to purchase and do the testing, but for any development or engineering work, there is no funding for that. I think in the statement of objective, the way the wording is laid out for modifications is: if there was something for an improved seal or moving a pocket, that type of stuff could be accomplished. But other than that, there would be no intent for development.

John Helfert: Once something's been awarded, there's room for technological improvements in the product.

Jonathan Rich: Thinking out loud here, but I mean if somebody came up with stretchable socks, or they submitted one thing, but then suddenly you had stretch socks. Very compliant, they're waterproof, they work great, and you want to propose that as a solution to incorporate into that suit even though you're two/three years into a contract, we'd definitely be open to improvements.

Is there any interest in lightweight armor to be developed within the suit system?

Negative. Not going to try to tackle armor in this effort that's going to be a whole different portfolio.

If there is lightweight armor, we're in the office where I can pass information on so you can hit me up on my email, and I can send information to the folks that handle the ballistics in my office.

Is the government looking to replace existing design for MASS/L-MASS.

We're looking to award a new contract for MASS/L-MASS. No sure what's meant by "replace the existing design." We just need to continue to sustain the capability. So, we're coming to the end of the current contract and we need to re-up.

SOFWERX: Please remember that submissions are do no later than 11 October, and you can find the submission form and other important event information on the event webpage: events.sofwerx.org/mass

