Boeing Courts Ares I Suppliers to Provide NASA with Best Value

ST. LOUIS, Feb. 06, 2008 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] today hosted an aerospace industry conference in Huntsville, Ala., to recruit the nation's best suppliers for the Ares I Instrument Unit Avionics (IUA) contract.

As prime contractor, Boeing will produce, deliver and install avionics systems for the Ares I rocket. The system consists of onboard computers, flight controls, communications equipment, and other instruments and software for monitoring and adjusting the rocket's speed and position during flight. NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville is leading the overall design effort.

The Ares I Industry Day conference drew more than 140 suppliers of all sizes and started the process of finding the best suppliers for NASA.

"We promised NASA we would encourage early supplier involvement while using competition to provide the best IUA solutions. That means giving NASA the opportunity to benefit from Boeing's buying power and expertise," said Dwight Potter, Boeing Ares I IUA program manager.

Boeing is looking to attract suppliers for items such as avionics components, wire harnesses and ground support equipment.

"Suppliers are an integral part of our Ares I program team, and our success depends on their participation and performance," Potter said.

Boeing provided attending suppliers with information about the Ares I avionics requirements and outlined plans to issue requests for information and proposals.

"We plan to distribute information requests in February with some preliminary NASA specifications to solicit initial comments and innovative ideas from industry. We can then work with NASA to finalize the requirements, eventually leading to draft and final requests for proposals (RFPs) in the coming months," said Ray Robin, Boeing Exploration Launch Systems supplier management. "We hope by including suppliers fully in the process, they will better understand our needs and provide us with innovative solutions. Following the RFPs, we'll go through the source-selection process later this year."

Boeing also targeted small businesses during the Industry Day event, recognizing the considerable benefits that small businesses offer.

"On the Ares program, we are focused on exceeding our small business goals and want to help small businesses develop the infrastructure needed to take on larger, more complex projects," said Robin.

Boeing operates one of the world's largest, most diverse global supplier networks in support of its space, commercial and defense programs. Through its supplier network, Boeing can ensure NASA benefits from the latest technologies while improving quality, cost and delivery schedules.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32.1 billion business with 72,000 employees worldwide.
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Contact Info:
Ed Memi
Space Exploration
(281) 226-4029
edmund.g.memi@boeing.com
Dean Acosta
Space Exploration
(281) 226-6005
dean.acosta@boeing.com