

Bids on massive U.S. telecom pact roll in

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Major telecom companies have begun submitting their bids for Networx, a massive communications upgrade planned by the United States government.

Sprint Nextel, AT&T, Qwest and MCI presented their bids to the General Services Administration for Networx Universal, the largest and most valuable segment of the overall contract that will be worth an estimated \$20 billion over the next 10 years.

Bids will be closed Oct. 24, and the Washington Post said Sunday that any company that wants to get in on federal telecom work will have to make its bid by that date.

The Post said analysts are reluctant to pick any big winners due to the relatively narrow range of technologies being offered.

"The government always figures out how to get us all pretty close from a technical and management perspective," said Qwest executive Diana Gowen. "Then it becomes a price game."

The GSA will spend about a year reviewing the bids for the sprawling project, which includes voice, data and wireless needs for 15,000 locations in the United States and overseas.

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