Request for Proposals - Temporary NYS Certification Application Processing Support
Addendum # 4 – Questions & Answers

Release Date: October 28, 2022

The following is a list of responses to questions submitted by prospective respondents ("Respondents") to the Request for Proposals Temporary NYS Certification Application Processing Support

1) Section II. Overview indicates "Respondent(s) will be expected to review up to 3,500 applications over a period of up to 18 months beginning in Q2 of FY2022-23, which will include providing technical assistance to help Applicants complete applications." Section III. Scope of Work indicates "Respondent(s) will assist in processing approximately 3,500 applications for MWBE certification in compliance with Article 15-A and applicable regulations." Are the 3,500 applications already received or is this an estimate of the number of applications anticipated to be received? Historically how many applications were received each year in last five years?

Response: There are 3,500 applications in different stages of the certification process. Specific application status should not impact the task at hand.

2) Does the ESD have a system of record inclusive of the application submission, a workflow where application documentation is stored, reviews with eligibility determination take place, along with application case notes etc.? If yes, will the ESD be providing the respondent with access for the purpose of facilitating and completing the scope work?

Response: Yes, to both questions.

3) The scope of work indicates ESD will provide an initial training to selected Respondents' staff. Respondent(s) will be required to train any new staff assigned to the project after the initial training, using DMWBD or DMWBD-approved materials. To ensure and determine an appropriate skilled staff, will the ESD share the current review process/procedures?

Response: The Division will share all information necessary to complete the scope of work with the selected respondent.

4) What is the current average review time for each type of review (certification, recertification, etc.)? Are there applicant response deadlines to ensure timely decisions on each application? If yes, how long are applicants given to respond to follow-up questions needed to complete reviews?

Response: The average review time varies based on the application types and the information provided by the applicant. Please refer to the relevant sections of the New York State Executive Law Article 15-A §§ 310-317 (Article 15-A) and New York State Code and Regulation Title 5 as referenced in the RFP for the deadlines.

5) For each type of review, what is the average number of applicant outreach occurrences? What are the methods of outreach? Email, phone, etc.?

Response: The number of outreach occurrences will vary based on the type of application and documents provided by the applicants. Outreach by system notification, email and phone is expected.

6) What method(s) will applicants use to receive technical assistance from the vendor? If telephone, will the vendor be responsible for providing the telephone solution and what hours of operation will the vendor be expected to staff the phones?

Response: Each Respondent should propose the method that they will use to provide technical assistance to applicants. Each Respondent will be responsible for any telephone solution used. The respondents should follow the Division's hours of operations of 9:00 am- 5:00 pm EST.

7) When the vendor provides ESD a suggested approval or denial, what type of information/report/detail does ESD expect to receive outlining the reasoning for the vendor's decision?

Response: The selected Respondent(s) will receive information as to the Division's expectations.

8) p. 1 Purpose – Of the expected 3,500 applications, what percent are new vs. renewals? Is there a backlog? If so, how many?

Response: The 3,500 applications are a mix of applications and will include applications in the various stages of the Certification Application process.

9) p.6 – Staff Experience and Qualifications, a. Respondents are encouraged to submit resumes for all members of the proposed team. Are we required to submit resumes for the full team of 50 – 100 people or can we just submit resumes for key personnel?

Response: Key personnel resumes are required. The qualifications of the certification analysts should meet the following minimum skills:

- Ability to interpret 15-A
- Ability to analyze data

- Ability to analyze and understand tax filings and business processes
- Strong written and oral communication skills
- Good organization
- Ability to digest large amounts of information in short time periods
- Attention to detail
- Ability to work independently
- Experience working with computer systems

10) p.7 – Estimated Cost - All Respondents must complete and submit with their proposal a budget, which shall include the cost of performing the tasks outlined herein. The budget shall be separate from the technical proposal. Should the budget be submitted as a separate, stand-alone cost proposal, separate from the Technical and Administrative proposals?

Response: Please refer to Section VII.1 of the RFP.

11) P.8 - Submission of a Complete Two-Part Proposal. Where should we include the estimated cost/budget – part 1 – Technical Proposal, part 2 – Administrative Proposal, or is this a part 3 - Budget?

Response: Please refer to Section VII.1 of the RFP.

12) p. 15 – Business Participation Opportunities for MWBEs - For purposes of this solicitation, ESD hereby establishes an overall goal of 30 percent for MWBE participation, 15 percent for New York State-certified Minority-owned Business Enterprise ("MBE") participation and 15 percent for New York State-certified Women-owned Business Enterprise ("WBE") participation (based on the current availability of MBEs and WBEs). Can the selected firm, as an MBE, satisfy the overall 30% goal for MWBE participation?

Response: A certified MWBE prime respondent can satisfy the aspirational 30% goal. If there is sub-contracting the respondent must try to satisfy the aspirational 30% goal.

13) p. 18 - PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN OWNED BUSINESSES. Contract Goals A. ESD hereby establishes an overall goal of 6% for SDVOB participation, based on the current availability of qualified SDVOBs. P21. PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES. For purposes of this procurement, ESD conducted a comprehensive search and determined that the Contract does not offer sufficient opportunities to set specific goals for participation by SDVOBs as subcontractors, service providers, and suppliers to Contractor. Please confirm whether there is a 6% SDVOB goal (p. 18) or does the Contract not offer sufficient opportunities to set specific SDVOB goals (p. 21)?

Response: An Addendum will be released to clarify this point.

14) What is the project budget?

Response: Budget will be based on project plan, approach, and methodology.

15) If multiple firms are selected, what is the anticipated division of applications to be assigned to the selected firms?

Response: The Division will assign applications based on the expertise and capacity of the selected and successful bidders.

16) Will the division of assigned applications be based on geographical/county location or volume, without regard to geographical/county location?

Response: The Division will assign applications without regard to geographical/county location.

17) Will the selected firm(s) be reimbursed for travel for site visits?

Response: Please see Section VII. 1. F of the RFP.

18) Will you have special provisions for out-of-state site visits?

Response: Please see Section VII. 1. F of the RFP.

19) Will the selected firm(s) have access to ESD's software platform?

Response: Yes.

20) p. 2 Scope of Work - The respondent will be expected to perform all work necessary to implement an efficient and thorough process on par with DMWBD application review process. What is meant by on par – are the selected firm(s) expected to develop their own certification process or are they to implement the one that is currently being used by ESD?

Response: The successful respondent will be trained by the Division and use the NYS decentralized certification process.

21) p. 2 Scope of Work – Respondent(s) will assist in processing approximately 3,500 applications for MWBE certification. p. 1 Purpose – Respondent(s) will be expected to review up to 3,500 applications over a period of up to 18 months. If the role of the selected firm is to assist, please clarify the role of the agency, for example is the responding firm conducting the certification review and the agency is approving or doing the quality check process.

Response: The respondent(s) will assist by providing technical assistance and reviewing applications in specific phases on the Certification process. The Division will provide a quality assurance team and offer training.

22) If the agency will be reviewing and approving all applications, what time should be allocated to the agency review in the 90-day process?

Response: Applications that are considered complete are expected to be "closed" (i.e., the final determination sent out to the applicant) within the time period dictated by NYS Executive Law 15-A. ESD will make the final determination on the applications in terms of whether their application has been approved.

23) Can you provide a geographical breakdown of where applicant firms are located?

Response: The Division accepts applications from every region of New York and any applicant based outside of New York that is authorized to do work in New York State.

24) Is there a cost associated with providing the selected firm(s) and each staff member working on the project with access to B2Gnow?

Response: There is no cost for the respondent.

25) If so, is that a reimbursable expense?

Response: Not applicable. Please see #25 above.

26) If a prime sub team is awarded, is it expected that the entire team use the same payroll and HR system for augmented staff?

Response: Yes

27) Will NYS ESD provide a cost proposal template and is there a not-to-exceed contract amount?

Response: No. Please submit your cost proposal via an Excel spreadsheet.

28) On average, how much time does it take to complete an application?

Response: The processing times varies with the type of application and the applicant.

29) I currently have a M/WBE application in pending status for my company. Does this preclude me from responding to the RFP?

Response: A New York State certification is not mandatory to submit a proposal for this RFP.

30) Is there a minimum requirement for the number of staff a company must have to be eligible to participate in the RFP response?
    a.   Will my firm be considered if it is a single member business?

Response: There is no minimum requirement of staff to be eligible to respond to this RFP. Yes, a single member business will be considered.

31) If my firm hasn't done business with NYS in the past, will my firm be considered should I submit an RFP response?

Response: ESD will review and consider every responsible proposal.

32) If we have not had a similar project in the past, will it be considered should I submit an RFP response?

Response: Please refer to Section VI. for selection criteria for this RFP.

33) Does experience gained from employment meet the needed criteria?
     a.   If so, will employment references fulfill the reference requirement?

Response: Yes. Please refer to Section V of the RFP for selection criteria.

34) Page 4 – Task 2 – Second paragraph. "Respondent(s) will also be required to submit monthly financial reports to ESD that include: the number of applications submitted, including application type (new or recertification); all invoices and proof of payments for the previous month; and any additional information as determined by ESD and the Respondent(s)." What does "proof of payments for the previous month" refer to?

Response: Payroll information is required.

35) What are the criteria for the determination of submitted applications to process payment?

Response: The Division will determine with the selected responded the specific applications that have been worked on and completed.

36) Page 2 – Scope of work – last paragraph. "ESD will provide an initial training to selected Respondents' staff. Respondent(s) will be required to train any new staff assigned to the project after the initial training using DMWBD or DMWBD-approved materials. ESD will provide continual training to selected Respondents' staff as applications advance though phases of the Certification process." Is this meant that ESD will only train one phase at a time, or will a full set of phases be taught initially allowing our teams to complete certification right away?

Response: ESD will decide on the approach based on firm experience.

37) Page 2 – Scope of work – third paragraph. "ESD will conduct a quality assessment of every application processed by Respondent(s). Applications submitted by the Respondent(s) are not deemed completed until ESD finishes quality assessment of same." How will ESD conduct these assessments? Will this delay the payment process?

Response: These assessments will be conducted with our quality assurance team and collaboratively with the selected respondent.

38) This question is related to OCSD-4 – MWBE and SDVOB Utilization Plan. Should second tier subs need to be listed in this form? Our subcontractor has several subcontractors of their own.

Response: Yes, if it will affect MWBE/SDVOB utilization. No matter how many tiers down, all MWBE spend should be reported. Additionally, and non MWBE vendors utilized by MWBE vendors should be listed as well.

39) Are there any paper applications?

Response: There will be no paper application assigned as part of this project.

40) As the selected firm(s) will be using ESD's platform – B2GNow, please confirm what aspects of the ESD IT Project Deliverable Criteria (Appendix A) are applicable to this project.

Response: Please review Appendix A for a determination.

41) Please confirm the forms that subconsultants need to submit.

Response: Please review the RFP.

42) P. 22 ix. Certification under State Tax Law Section 5-a - Only the prime consultant completes Form ST 220-CA, but Schedule A to Form ST 220-CA requires detailed information from the sub-consultants, such as tax ID number, etc., if applicable. Can you provide a link to Schedule A to Form 220-CA?

Response: Yes. Please send the request to ESD's dedicated email address.

43) Provide a list of SDVOB firms that can perform the services required for this procurement.

Response: Please use this link to access the Directory of New York State Certified SDVOBs https://online.ogs.ny.gov/SDVOB/search.

44) Provide a list of MWBE firms that can perform the services required for this procurement.

Response: Please use this link to access the Directory of New York State Certified MWBEs https://ny.newnycontracts.com/?TN

45) What is the expected timeframe for ESD to conduct their Quality Assessment of an application?

Response: The quality assessment will vary depending on demand.

46) Other direct costs – will there be any in-person meetings required, either progress meetings or trainings?

Response: Please budget accordingly.

47) Will monthly progress meetings be virtual or in-person?

Response: Both options are available.

48) If in-person, where in the state of New York will the meetings take place, Albany, or Manhattan?

Response: Manhattan.

49) Are the insurance requirements applicable to subconsultants?

Response: Yes

50) Page 1 of the RFP, Section II. Overview: Purpose of the RFP States "Respondent(s) will review applications from those requesting certification under the MWBE program ("Applicants") ...etc." Will the Respondent be required to provide any marketing/outreach services to encourage businesses to apply for the program?

Response: No

51) Page 3 of the RFP, Section III. Scope of Work; Task 2 States, "Respondent(s) should be able to provide staff that would provide services to ESD on a full-time basis for the duration of the engagement..." Will ESD require staff to be present on-site, or will staff be permitted to work remotely?

Response: ESD will consider proposals with in-person and virtual staffing plans.

52) Is there a local preference for this RFP?

Response: The Division will review all proposals that fulfill RFP requirements.

53) Is there any software that the winning bidder is expected to use?

Response: Yes.