

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### ***MWBE New York State Contract System*** **Questions and Answers**

The Department received a number of questions regarding information about the contractor previously engaged to provide the New York State Contract System and the terms of the contract between the Department and the prior contractors. These questions are not relevant to the RFP, and will not be addressed in this document.

**Question:** Are you looking for suppliers who can license pre-existing software that can fulfill this need?

**Answer:** Not exclusively. However, if Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) software can fulfill ESD's requirements it would be a considered option.

**Question:** Are you looking for suppliers to extend pre-existing software with customization to fulfill this need?

**Answer:** Not exclusively. However, extending a COTS solution to fulfill ESD's requirements would be a considered option.

**Question:** Are you looking for suppliers to build new custom web-based software to fulfill this need?

**Answer:** Not exclusively. However, custom web based software deployed in a SaaS model that fulfills ESD's requirements is a considered option.

**Question:** What are the technical environment constraints? Do you have a required application server environment or preferred webservers/programming languages or frameworks?

**Answer:** As ESD is looking for Software as a Solution (SaaS) proposal we don't have a required platform. However, ESD is a Microsoft development shop so our preference would be to utilize Microsoft Technologies (MS SQL Server and MS.Net Framework) and Microsoft Programming languages (C#).

**Question:** What is the estimated maximum budget/award amount for this project?

**Answer:** In the interest of encouraging the most competitive responses to the RFP, the Department will not disclose the maximum budget estimates for this engagement.

**Question:** Why are there no applicable MWBE goals associated with RFP?

**Answer:** The Department determined that the services described in the RFP offered insufficient subcontracting opportunities to establish MWBE subcontracting goals.

**Question:** Are there additional considerations for having only NY State residents participate in this RFP?

**Answer:** The Department will not limit this procurement to only NY State residents.

**Question:** Was there an RFI prior to the RFP? If so, what vendors / products were demoed?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** Is ESD looking for "off the shelf" software that can customized or a complete custom solution?

**Answer:** ESD is open to any solution (COTS, custom or any combination) that fulfills the specified requirements

**Question:** Is any or all work to be performed on-site at ESD?

**Answer:** It is expected that work will be accomplished both on and off site. As the desired solution is SaaS based, we anticipate that much development work will be handled off site, however there will need to be a regular on site presence by team members to meet with staff, perform additional requirements scoping/clarification and project management.

**Question:** The RFP requests hourly rates: is this a time and materials contract or deliverable based?

**Answer:** The project will be deliverables based, however hourly rates are required to address change requests, and necessary functionality that falls outside of the original scope.

**Question:** How will changes to scope be handled?

**Answer:** Through a change management process acceptable to both parties. For example, the business case for the change will be identified and documented, the change will be requested and approved by both ESD and the proposed vendor and finally the change will be accepted through the established UAT process.

**Question:** Appendix B should be submitted separately. Can all other Appendixes be provided in a single APPENDIXES document or be submitted separate from Appendix B?

**Answer:** The other appendices can be a separate document or included with the technical proposal. All proposal documents can be mailed together in one package but Appendix B should not be bound to the rest of the proposal. It should be a separate document.

**Question:** The Department received a question related to whether the successful respondent to the RFP will need to demonstrate a particular business size.

**Answer:** There are no specific requirements as to number of employees, annual revenue, or other indicia of business size contained in the RFP.

**Question:** Does Appendix H require Vendor completion?

**Answer:** Exhibit H is an illustrative example of information submitted by New York State agencies and authorities to the Department through the New York State Contract System. Respondents to the RFP should not complete any of the forms in Appendix H.

**Question:** What specific Appendixes and/or Exhibits DO NOT REQUIRE vendor completion?

**Answer:** Appendix H and Exhibits 1-9 are illustrative examples of information collected by the Department through the New York State Contract System and should not be completed by respondents. Appendix J contains a complete list of documents which must be completed by respondents.

**Question:** Current Stacks in Use?

**Answer:** Microsoft (ASP.Net and SQL Server)

**Question:** Should the current (or any part of) the B2GNow platform be maintained or is a totally new solution desired?

**Answer:** Respondents should assume that they will be solely responsible for providing all services described in the RFP in the event that they are selected as the successful respondent.

**Question:** How old is the current platform?

**Answer:** ESD has been on the current platform for around four and a half years.

**Question:** How long did it take to build current platform?

**Answer:** Unknown as it is a 3<sup>rd</sup> party platform.

**Question:** What are your MAIN issues with current platform? What are the main new functionalities in the new system versus the current?

**Answer:** The required specifications and functionalities of the NYSCS are described in the RFP. The successful respondent should assume that it is wholly responsible for developing the NYSCS, and therefore any issues with the current platform are not relevant to this RFP.

**Question:** Are there similar systems in other states you'd like to emulate? Where?

**Answer:** The required specifications and functionalities of the NYSCS are described in the RFP. While systems used in other states may inform potential respondents, such other systems are not a substitute for the specifications and functionalities described in the RFP.

**Question:** Can we get a demo of the NYS Ag/Au's platform?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** Section 7A lists several systems for which the system must be able to interface with. Can you provide any additional clarity as to the types of data that would be shared with these systems and are they imports or exports?

**Answer:** There is the requirement to both import and export data. The type of data would be consistent with the information collected per the functional requirements. Respondents should assume that all data fields utilized in the system should be available for import/export.

**Question:** As per Exhibit 8 "Inquiry Tracking", Please expand upon the types of communications that must be tracked. Also, what is the source of the incoming inquiries? Are they always vendor inquiries or might they be submitted by staff as well. Must inquiries be "resolved" or "processed"?

**Answer:** The Department tracks communications related to certification assistance, contract management, MWBE compliance activities and business development. As such, the system should allow for communication among our various stakeholders, which include ESD staff, Respondent's help desk/customer support, Ag/Au's, certification applicants, prime vendors, subcontractors, elected officials and outside partner organizations.

**Question:** Should the cost proposal include actual costs for use of the system and potential system interfaces for all identified state agencies or only "provide a cost structure for on-boarding up to 102 NYS agencies and authorities"?

**Answer:** We are expecting an all-in cost for a complete system. In cases where an Ag/Au requires additional interfaces we require a cost structure to provide additional interfaces when these are necessary ('on-boarding'). Ag/Au's will not be charged user fees.

**Question:** Can NYS provide any additional detail or specifications as to the size and scope of system use in terms of anticipated monthly volume of electronic applications, MWBE certification records, staff/vendor users, contracts, utilization plans, outreach campaigns, customer support tickets, etc.?

**Answer:** Such specific detail cannot be provided in advance. Overall contract activity and spending is summarized by the NYS Office of the State Comptroller's Open Book New York site (<http://www.openbooknewyork.com/>).

**Question:** What will be the process to ensure that pricing is sealed based on the separation of the cost information within the submission?

**Answer:** All proposals received (both hard copy and electronic copy) will be kept sealed until the deadline. After the deadline they will be opened and recorded by finance staff then the technical proposals will be forwarded on to the review team for evaluation.

**Question:** Should the cost related to the DBE program encompass potential system use by NYSDOT and any/all sub-recipients of federal funds in NYS that are required to establish and monitor compliance against DBE contract goals?

**Answer:** Proposals to provide services related to DBE compliance should be expressed as a single hourly rate, and should not vary based upon users.

**Question:** How many hard copies of Appendix B - Budget are required? (Section 3.1, Proposal Content and Conditions)

**Answer:** Five copies of the proposal should be submitted to the address listed in the RFP: Section I – Administrative Information, Paragraph 1.3.

**Question:** The RFP refers to a number of different user groups (NYS Ag/Au, agencies, authorities, contractors, vendors, MWBEs, grantees, etc.). Please clarify which user types are considered public users, front-end NYSCS portal users, and which will need back-end application access.

**Answer:** Vendors who perform work or provide products or services via NYS contract are public users, and will require front-end access. Certain Ag/Au's are also grantees and will need front-end access as well as Ag/Au authority access. ESD will require full access.

**Question:** How many back-end users will be using this system? How many of these users are considered Administrators?

**Answer:** ESD will be the primary back-end user. There are approximately 60 current users; of these fewer than 10 will need administrative rights.

**Question:** Please clarify what ESD desires in reference to faxed applications and documentation. Is data parsing or PDF document creation required? (Section 2.3, Application Submission #5)

**Answer:** Data parsing, possibly. PDF document creation, definitely.

**Question:** What is the nature of the integrations listed in Appendix I? What systems are the listed agencies currently using? What are the integrations for and how do they function? Please provide the specific number of integrations, for pricing purposes. (Appendix I, System Interfaces #3)

**Answer:** The nature of the integrations listed is primarily import/export interfaces for MWBE contract compliance related data (i.e. Contracts, Sub Contracts, PO's, Payments, Prime Vendors, Sub Contractor Vendors, Change Orders, etc.). For the purposes of the RFP, proposers should assume that required data would be supplied by the integrating agency in a format that is acceptable to the proposer for importing and if necessary exported in a similar format. The number of specific interfaces is unique for each entity's integration and the total system wide is unknown at this time. The number of interfaces required would also be determined by the structure of the proposer's system. Pricing for these purposes should be reflected in the hourly rate table.

**Question:** Does ESD require state agencies to build their own integrations through the use of APIs? (Appendix I, System Interfaces, #4)

**Answer:** ESD does not require that state agencies build their own integrations via APIs, however the option must be available without extra cost should they choose to do so. APIs must be made available and thoroughly documented (with examples when necessary).

**Question:** Does ESD currently have a document management tool? If so, what is it? Is the agency familiar with Microsoft SharePoint?

**Answer:** ESD does not currently have a document management tool, however we are looking at SharePoint as a possibility.

**Question:** Does ESD already have a Microsoft Enterprise Agreement?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** We are aware that ESD is already using Microsoft Dynamics CRM/365 and is currently in the process of starting another Microsoft Dynamics CRM/365 project. Will the NYS MWBE NYSCS be a standalone solution or does ESD intend to utilize the existing/planned CRM environment?

**Answer:** For the purposes of this RFP, the NYSCS should be considered a stand-alone project. There will be integrations with various ESD systems but these will be handled via the before mentioned API infrastructure or through custom development based on the hourly rate table.

**Question:** We are proposing a solution based on Microsoft Dynamics CRM/365 Online. In light of that, is there an alternative ongoing services pricing structure or breakdown ESD would prefer?

**Answer:** Not at this time.

**Question:** Page 14 requests that vendors provide an hourly rate to build the DBE component, yet Appendix B – Budget does not provide a location for hourly rates specific to the DBE component. Please advise.

**Answer:** The hourly rate would be the same for any enhancements to the system. No special rates are required for the DBE component.

**Question:** Since we have a large % of the requirements already complete and operational in our purpose-built functioning software platform and can deliver functionality immediately. Can any of these mandatory qualification requirements be waived?

A. Experience - If we partner with another firm that meets all the criteria are we allowed to participate as a partner and/or subcontractor if we have not implemented our solution for a federal, state, county or other government?

B. Years in business - If we partner with another firm that meets all the criteria are we allowed to participate as a partner and/or subcontractor if we have been in business for less than 5 years?

**Answer:** Please see Addendum 1 for an update to this requirement.

**Question:** Can the mandatory condition (Section 2.4 A) be satisfied by a project done for a large county for MWBE certification.

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Page 5; Section 5, Bullet 7 – Will monthly meetings between the vendor, the Department, and any integration partners be at the Department site in Albany?

**Answer:** A meeting will be held at the Department offices in Albany, NY at the beginning of the project. A schedule of meetings and their locations will be developed with ESD and both parties' input based upon major milestone presentations, additional functional requirements meetings, etc.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 3, Item A1 - Application questions must be customizable by NYS. Does the Department require self-help functionality to be embedded in the system, or will the contractor execute changes at the request of the Department?

**Answer:** To the extent possible, Department staff should be able to customize forms which may need modification dependent upon the type of report and due date.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 3 - The current web site at <https://esd.ny.gov/mwbe/getcertified.html> appears to have all of the functionality in this section. Is the requirement of this RFP to replace all of this existing functionality or to work along with the data collected here and pull that data into the contract system for Review?

**Answer:** esd.ny.gov does not possess the functionality described in the cited provision of the RFP.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 2.3.2 - Please provide the expected User population. Please include all Dept. reviewers as well as number of log-ins required for other agencies.

**Answer:** The system will need to accommodate a large but currently unknown number of users, as policies change and more entities are brought on board. The system should be able to expand its capabilities to match future users.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 3, A.1 - What is the total size of disc allocation for database?

**Answer:** Unknown at this time – the current platform is 3<sup>rd</sup> party and proprietary.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 3, A.1 - What is the total number of files and disc allocation for all images currently in the system?

**Answer:** Unknown at this time – the current platform is 3<sup>rd</sup> party and proprietary.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 3, A.1 - What is the average annual growth in size of database and image storage per year?

**Answer:** Unknown at this time – the current platform is 3<sup>rd</sup> party and proprietary.

**Question:** Page 8, Section 3, A.1 - For the current system in use, please define the following disc space allocations for; Database - total number of rows in top 5(in row count) transactional tables Total number of rows in top 5 Historical tables.

**Answer:** Unknown at this time – the current platform is 3<sup>rd</sup> party and proprietary.

**Question:** Page 9, Section 3, Application review and Appeal - A. - Please describe how many levels of review are required for certification.

**Answer:** Two

**Question:** Page 9, Section 3, Application review and Appeal - E. - What is the current number of letters produced by the system or the expected number of correspondence? Will there be a Printing Vendor printing the letters? If so please provide details on print vendor interface requirements.

**Answer:** Each department produces their own correspondence. Certification generates on average from 2 to 6 document requests and determination letters per record. Certification has over 15 different letter templates; Recertification notices require 3 different email notifications; Appeals notices require at least 3 notifications. Would favor solutions where user (DMWBD) could self-modify letter templates or expect an immediate turn-around on a request to modify / add / delete letter templates. There wouldn't be a Print Vendor or associated interface – the solution should generate the letters electronically which could then be printed at ESD.

**Question:** Page 9, Section 3, G - Application submission: There are several references to a "legacy system". What is the expectation of the data in the legacy system as it relates to this new system? Is a conversion needed?

**Answer:** The legacy system referenced is the current NYSCS Platform.

**Question:** Page 10, Section 3, Item L - What is the source of the appeal and hearing process data? Will this data be tracked within the system, or will it come from another source?

**Answer:** The system must allow users to upload PDF files related to appeal hearings.

**Question:** Page 10, Section 3, Item A - Reports must be available at all points in the denial and appeal process. Are these reports part of the contractor-submitted area, or does the system generate them? Do you know the possible total number of disparate reports? (by format and/or actor?)

**Answer:** Currently appeal documents are uploaded to the NYSCS. The system should generate reports from the fields (to be part of the system design).

**Question:** Section 3 page 10 Application review and Appeal - M 1. - Please describe the interface for updating the State's official directory.

**Answer:** The Official NYS Certified MWBE directory will be part of the proposed system / solution. There will be no interface requirements.

**Question:** Page 11, Section 5, Item A – In what format must the system provide bid and event notifications? (e.g. paper, email, other?)

**Answer:** Email and fax notifications.

**Question:** Page 11, Section 5 Business Development C. - Please describe the interface with the NYS Contract Reporter.

**Answer:** Currently information from the NYS Contract Reporter is displayed in an I-Frame – there is no direct interface. Going forward, this may be revised to display information based on an XML feed from the Contract Reporter (which should be considered in the proposal). Future discussions may occur to expand the relationship between these two systems beyond the XML feed, however this would be addressed via an additional scope or change request.

**Question:** Page 11, Section 6, Item A1 - The format of agency goal plans must be customizable by the Department. Does the Department require self-help functionality to be embedded in the system, or will the contractor execute changes at the request of the Department?

**Answer:** The preferred solution will allow for fields to be turned on/turned off by ESD staff depending upon the type of goal plan being provided.

**Question:** Page 12, Section 7, Item A1 - Do you foresee the use of FEDRAMP?

**Answer:** Not currently.

**Question:** Page 12, Section 7, Item E - The system must allow NYS Ag/Au to generate messages to prime contractors and grantees through the system on NYS Ag/Au letterhead. Are there specific format requirements (e.g., paper, email, other.)

**Answer:** Email, fax and paper documents must be made available.

**Question:** The first Mandatory Requirement seems restrictive as firms may have similar experience in the commercial sector for implementation and management of similar systems. This requirement sounds more favorable to the existing contractor. Can you please reconsider, so minority firms with same type of experiences are able to submit a reasonable bid?

**Answer:** Please see Addendum 1 for an update to this requirement.

**Question:** Appendix B, Budget - Where should a bidder include ongoing administrative and other expenses?

**Answer:** Please see Addendum 2 for an update to this requirement. This chart will replace the one in Appendix B, bottom of page 2. A revised fillable budget document is attached.