The MWBE Certification Assistance Program Request for Proposals (RFP) - Addendum #1

Release Date: June 15, 2020

The following is a list of responses to questions submitted by prospective respondents ("Respondents") to the **MWBE Certification Assistance Program Request for Proposals**

Request for Proposals - The MWBE Certification Assistance Program - Responses to Questions

No.	Question	Answer
1.	Within the RFP is stated, "DMWBD is seeking proposals from public and private partnerships to award a grant to a consulting firm". Does this mean the applicant should be a public/private partnership of two or more entities, or does DMWBD seek a consulting firm to enter into a public/private partnership, meaning the consulting firm is the private partner and DMWBD is the public partner?	DMWBD is accepting proposals from both public organizations and private organizations
2.	Must the applicant be an MWBE itself? Our firm runs both an MWBE-certified sole proprietorship and an LLC with pending certification, and I'm wondering if the "pending certification" status for the LLC will impact eligibility or competitiveness.	The applicant does not have to be an MWBE, but they must meet the goals outlined in the RFP and implement a Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP)
3.	We could not access the State Finance Law §§139-j and 139-k forms, which are required for submittal with the proposal.	Please utilize the following link: http://intranet.empire.internal/Finance/SF_Law139_JK.pdf
4.	Within the NYS MWBE Certification Assistance Program. RFP Citing page 2, section I. 1) We are currently waiting for the WBE & WOSB recertification to be approved (previously awarded 6/18/2019, recertification submitted on 4/8/2020), and	1. Certified and Non-Certified MWBE's are eligible to submit a proposal. They must meet the goals outlined in the RFP and implement a Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP).

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	have submitted our NYS Fast Track M/WBE Application (submitted on 5/8/2020) and waiting for that to be granted as well. Can we still submit a proposal for this program? 2) Is there an incumbent firm that has supported this effort in the past?	2. There are currently smaller Certification Application Program that have been in effect since 2018. This scale is a novel program.
5.	Could we have clarifications on the terms **Complete, Reviewed and Accepted** as used in Program Funding: "Payment will be released once those files are complete, reviewed, and accepted by DMWBD." Of concern, if we identify red flags and recommend not certifying Could you provide suggestions on the Mentor Protégé program? Does ESD want us to train a Protégé organization in conducting certification analysis or other technical assistance programs? Or, can we mentor another MWBE on other aspects of business in general?	Clarification is as follows: Completed – Grantee has completed it's total review of application and obtained all necessary documents. Reviewed – After being submitted to ESD and reviewed for completeness and accuracy Accepted – Upon submission to ESD and review, application is decisioned for certification (accepted, denied, rejected, returned, etc.,) The responsibility of the Prime firm is to mentor the protégé in back-office/operational skills that the protégé has identified their need to be mentored. The Division will be a partner through the life of the MPP and procurement to ensure goals are being met and provide technical assistance where needed.
6.	In relation to section 3 of the Technical Assistance Program methodology labeled "Critical Analysis and Certification Recommendation" on page 4 of the RFP, can the awardee require photos/video calls to assess office/warehouse space as part of MWBE certification and re-certification reviews?	Photos/videos can be requested from the applicant, as needed. Awardee will be expected to perform phone interviews prior to approving or denying a business. An onsite visit would be performed by ESD.
7.	In reference to Section III. Scope of Work and subsection "Program Metrics" on page 7 of the RFP, please answer the following questions: a. Do the metrics for "[n]umber of total certification applications	a. Submitted refers to applications submitted from awardee to ESD. B. Marked by awardee as to be returned. To be returned by Division. C. Marked by awardee as to be rejected. To be rejected by Division

	submitted" refer to the applications submitted to the DMWBD by the awardee? Or by MWDBE's to the awardee? b. Do the metrics for "percentage of applications returned" refer to the applications returned from the DMWBD to the awardee? Or from the awardee to MWDBEs? c. Do the metrics for "percentage of applications rejected" refer to the MWBE applications rejected by the DMWBD and submitted by the awardee? Or rejected by the awardee?	
8.	Regarding Section V. Selection Criteria on pages 8 and 9 of the RFP, if the awardee participates in the mentorship protégé program, is the mentee required to work on this project or can the mentor advise the mentee while the mentee works on a separate project and/or develops its business?	The Protégé is intended to be a subcontractor to this contract and the Mentor is intended to be the prime contractor
8.a	How many MWBE applications did the NYS receive in 2017, 2018 and 2019?	2017 – 2716 2018 – 3025 2019 – 3001
9.	How many MWBE certifications were granted in 2017 and 2018? (Proposer was able to retrieve this information for 2019 from the Annual Report https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/DivisionofMinorityandWomen%27sBusinessDevelopmentAnnualReport2019.pdf but unable to find this information in the 2017 and 2018 reports.	The information is as follows: 2017 – 1882 2018 – 1737 2019 – 1467
10.	Where do applicants traditionally bottleneck in the process? Which document(s) do applicants traditionally have trouble producing?	Obtaining documentation from applicants -trouble producing: single member LLC operating agreements, meeting minutes, stock ledgers/narratives, proof of capitalization.

No.	Question	Answer
		Bottlenecks: 20 days 3x to provide documents, analyze & writing out final decisions.
11.	What is the average "application submission" to "certification" timeline for applicants with no roadblocks?	From time received and assigned to analyst with no roadblocks could be up to 30 days.
12.	When does the DMWBD expect services to begin?	Services will begin upon award with a training component first.
13.	Within Section "III. SCOPE OF WORK, Program Funding," (Page 8) under the program funding section, first paragraph, last sentence, it states "No more than half of the awarded amount, $500,000, will be paid during the first six (6) months of the program and its contingent upon completing 950 files. Payment will be released once those files are complete, reviewed, and accepted by DMWBD." The second paragraph under the funding section goes on to state that "Payments will be made monthly on a reimbursement basis, after submission of invoices." Please offer clarification on the two (2) statements above. Are reimbursements made monthly or after 950 applications are completed?	Payment is made in a 6 month increment after review of the files within that period to ensure the files are complete.
14.	What is the timeline for monthly invoices being paid?	Payment is made in a 6 month increment after review of the files within that period to ensure the files are complete.
15.	What supporting documentation needs to be included with invoices?	Documentation includes the monthly reports and validation time and work of the awardee staff who has worked on each application during the invoice period.
16.	The RFP states the opportunity is a grant, but the language is more of a contract. Please confirm if this RFP is a grant or a contract. If, yes to being a grant, why is this procurement vehicle being utilized?	Per ESD procurement and grant rules, the dollar amount of the grant requires an RFP.

No.	Question	Answer
17.	RFP states at least 1,900 applications reviewed (completed). As such, what processes or systems are in place by ESD to process completed applications by the awardee?	Recommendations will be reviewed by an analyst at the Division. If issues, analyst will send back with comments. If not, analyst will pass for final review by director and/or legal.
18.	Do you have a confirmed/guaranteed time-frame due to the fact invoices/payments are based on approved M/W/BE applications (P. 8 - Payment will be released once those files are complete, reviewed, and accepted by DMWBD)?	Payment is made in a 6 month increment after review of the supporting documents within the invoice period.
19.	Is ESD giving the awardee access to B2G to review the applications? If, no, why aren't you giving the awardee access to the system?	Although not fully confirmed the thought process is to allow awardee access. Final decision to come. Always concerns of confidentiality
20.	Please confirm if the entire program will be conducted remotely.	The expectation at this moment is that the awardee can perform the services remotely.
21.	Are you considering extending the 1-year opportunity due to COVID-19 and current state affairs in New York State and the United States?	We will take under consideration.
22.	Does New York State ESD have a RAMP up schedule and training ready for the awardee?	Yes, the training will be part of an intensive onboarding process.
23.	Why contract this work to outside firm? Section 1, Introduction.	The Division is seeking to better address the volume of applications.
24.	Please clarify the workflow. (Scope of Work, Section iii).	Intake/receive application. Application assigned and reviewed by analyst for recommendation. Recommendation approved or denied by Director.
25.	Will the Awardee use ESDC's NYS Contract System to collect documents?	Yes.
26.	Is the intention a paperless system?	Yes
27.	Who receives the original documents?	Application and documents will be uploaded by applicant into contract system. Division will assign applications to awardee who will see app and

No.	Question	Answer
		documents. Additional docs will be requested, in contracts system, by awardee.
28.	Does ESD assign applications to the awardee? If so, how will applications be assigned?	Yes, through contracts system. Will be assigned to one user to then divide to others as desired.
29.	At what pace are applications assigned?	Applications would be assigned in a large block at the start and then a continuous flow of applications as the awardee processes from the initial assigned block.
30.	Will the awardee have access to the MWBE system.	NYS Contract System, yes.
31.	The budget calls for an hourly rate. Is it possible to price this by application completed?	However, the amount is computed per application, it should be converted to an hourly rate in order to satisfy the requirements of the RFP.
32.	What is the average estimated time to review and complete the application process?	Ideally 30 days.
33.	Within the Technical Assistance Program, the following need clarification: Are site visits required? If required what triggers a site visit? Is travel required? If so, how much travel?	Site visits will be performed by ESD personnel as needed.
34.	Within III. Scope of Work: Technical Assistance Program – 3. Critical Analysis and Certification Recommendation page 4, is this purely a review of the documentation provided by the applicants for certification or is verification or vetting through third party and database checks expected?	No third-party verification. If documentation seems suspect, ask for clarification and/or make note in final determination
35.	Within III. Scope of Work, will the DMWBD provide an operation/policy manual or are the respondents required to produce one?	Certification Methodology and Standard Operation Procedures would be provided as part of the onboarding process.

No.	Question	Answer
36.	Within III. Scope of Work: Program Funding page 8, are Non-Personnel costs, such as a database, included in the $1million grant?	The grant amount should include overhead and any new items needed to complete the requirements.
37.	How is DMWBD defining "accepted" (that the Applicant has received certification, or the file is complete and counts towards the 950). If the Awardee determines after analysis of the MWBE applicant that they are not eligible for certification, does that analysis count towards the required 950 applicants?	Accepted means division accepts the recommendation by awardee and does not need awardee to do further work on the application.
38.	Within IV. Schedule of Dates page 8, the RFP indicates a pre-bid meeting on June 19th. Please advise what time the meeting would be and confirm that this will be a virtual meeting. If a virtual meeting, is there dial-in information in order to attend this meeting?	No pre-bid meeting is scheduled at this time.
39.	On Page 4: Rejection Rules, can you please elaborate on the rejection rules? Are there a certain number of times applicants can be rejected?	If applicant does not respond at all, awardee recommends rejection. If applicant provides response that does not answer questions 3x, then awardee recommends rejection. Once an application is rejected by the Division, the application is considered "accepted"
40.	On Page 5 – training, are there a certain number of times the applicants can receive technical assistance reviews from the awardee?	No maximum number of assistance reviews. Applicant will be asked 3x for each document if they respond without the document.
41.	On Page 5 - All additional documents requested by the awardee must also be uploaded into the NYSCS application. Will this be done by the Applicant or is this expected to be completed by the Awardee?	Documents will be uploaded by the applicant at the awardee's request.
42.	On Page 5; Paragraph below "Note". Last sentence - "Awardee must advise applicants if applicant does not meet the minimum NYS MWBE certification eligibility requirements"	If does not meet minimum requirements, should recommend to the division that application be returned. No final determinations by awardee.

Minimum requirements will be outlined in training |

No.	Question	Answer
	Is awardee making final determinations? What do you mean by "advise applicants"? Are we saying that we are sending applicants official notice of decline of application?	
43.	On Page 7 - PROGRAM METRICS - as an awardee, are you to follow this program metrics the way ESD does or can we use our own?	Per ESD
44.	Are there any restrictions on what types or locations of team members/resources that can not work on the project (i.e. visa restrictions, geographic restrictions)	At this time, there are currently no restrictions on the location of team members. Respondents should be in compliance with all Federal and State employment requirements.
45.	What is the current workflow application process to certify and recertify?	Intake/receive application. Application assigned and reviewed by analyst for recommendation. Recommendation approved or denied by Director.
46.	Do we replace the NYS contract system for application submission?	No
47.	Do we replace the NYS Contract search capabilities for identifying certified companies/individuals?	No
48.	Will Existing state portals be used for intake and informational purposes?	Yes
49.	Would we be communicating through our technical platform directly with the applicant or would all communications go through existing NYS website/tools?	Mostly thorough existing platform. May require use of email/phone for some communications.
50.	Would any non-awardee members need to access the system?	No.
51.	What system-specific requirements are available (i.e. technical requirements documentation, business requirements documentation) or are we expected to	Certification Methodologies, Standard Operation Procedures, etc. are developed and will be a part of onboarding process.

No.	Question	Answer
	gather these as part of our initial year of implementation?	
52.	Is the gathering of requirements included in the initial fees or would these be financed separately?	All inclusive.
53.	Is it in-scope or out-of-scope for a firm to replace the current application process? Do we need to integrate with any other systems to share information or data (i.e. the NYS Contract System, etc.)	Out of scope. Will use the current contracts system
54.	Do systems need to connect or can they share data files on a scheduled basis without being physically or electronically connected?	Awardee will be utilizing the existing system for processing.
55.	What types of reporting is needed above those outlined in the RFP and to whom do they go? Real-time reports/dashboards or periodic role-based reporting and who needs to access or given to?	Project Manager/Analyst would be assigned to awardee. No other reporting is required outside of what's in RFP. Additional reports could be requested as the project moves along.
56.	Is there another opportunity to ask questions beyond this initial request to gather the technical requirements needed to be able to scope the work involved? If yes, when and how would this be achieved.	No, we are having one Q&A session.
57.	Are there any restrictions on for-profit entities that are responding?	The Division is accepting proposals from public organizations and private organizations.
58.	Can we obtain a map of the current process that identifies the detailed steps the provider will have to assume?	Yes, based on the certification methodology process.
59.	Will the same level of research be required for every applicant/re-applicant?	Slightly different levels for new/recert, otherwise the same
60.	We are assuming that the provider will "score" applicants/re-applicants based on the existing state methodology. Can we get	Certification Methodology will be provided and an part of the onboarding process.

No.	Question	Answer
	a copy of the State's scoring methodology that will be used by the provider?	
61.	What are the historical annual processing volumes?	Approximately 3000 annually.
62.	What are the current performance objectives, and actuals, relating to throughput of applications?	At this time, it would be based on approximately 20/month for analysts.
63.	What percent of current applicants are not certified?	Due to time constraints, cannot answer at this time.
64.	Are providers free to re-engineer the process as long as the performance metrics are met?	ESD would be open to process improvement, but any and all process changes must approved by ESD.
65.	What are some of stakeholder groups internally?	All NYS agencies and authorities, ESD - Agency Services and Compliance
66.	Can we join forces with another organization to complete the project?	Organizations can join forces to submit the proposal. The awardee will responsible for completing the project as proposed. Changes to how the awardee will perform on the contract will require ESD approval.
67.	How many additional years can the contract be extended?	The awardee shall provide the services described herein for a term of one (1) year and is expected to complete at least 1,900 application reviews in one (1) year. DMWBD reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to extend any agreement with the awardee for an additional term of one (1) year or to terminate any agreement after a term of six (6) months