RFP Questions and Clarifications Memorandum

To: Vendors Responding to RFP Number 4534 for the WIC MIS Maintenance & Operations

From: Craig P. Orgeron, Ph.D.

Date: July 25, 2024

Subject: Responses to Questions Submitted and Clarifications to Specifications

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**RFP Number 4534 is hereby amended as follows:**

1. **Any and all references to “RFP No. 4324” shall be and hereby are deleted and replaced with “RFP No. 4534”.**
2. **Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 11 shall be and hereby is revised to read:**

ITS reserves the right to request additional information or clarification of a Vendor’s proposal at any time during the evaluation process. The Vendor’s cooperation during the evaluation process in providing ITS staff with adequate responses to requests for clarification will be considered a factor in the evaluation of the Vendor’s overall responsiveness. Lack of such cooperation or failure to provide the information in the manner required may, at the State’s discretion, result in the disqualification of the Vendor’s proposal.

1. **Section III: Vendor Information, Item 16 shall be and hereby is revised to read:**

The State reserves the right to solicit Best and Final Offers (BAFOs) from Vendors, principally in situations in which proposal costs eclipse available funding or the State believes none of the competing proposals presents a Best Value (lowest and best proposal) opportunity. Because of the time and expense incurred by both the Vendor community and the State, BAFOs are not routinely conducted. Vendors should offer their best pricing with the initial solicitation. Situations warranting solicitation of a BAFO will be considered an exceptional practice for any procurement. However, the State reserves the right to issue BAFOs to any and all responding Vendors at any time during the RFP evaluation process. ~~Vendors that remain in a competitive range within an evaluation may be requested to tender Best and Final Offers, at the sole discretion of the State.~~  All such Vendors will be provided an equal opportunity to respond with a Best and Final Offer under a procedure to be defined by the State that encompasses the specific, refined needs of a project, as part of the BAFO solicitation. The State may re-evaluate and amend the original project specifications should it be deemed necessary in order to improve the opportunity for attaining Best Value scenarios from among the remaining competing Vendors. All BAFO proceedings will be uniformly conducted, in writing and subject to solicitation by the State and receipt from the Vendors under a precise schedule.

1. **Section IV: Legal and Contractual Information, Item 7.3 shall be and hereby is revised to read:**

~~The Vendor shall have no limitation on liability for claims related to the following items:~~ Pursuant to Mississippi Code Annotated Section 25-53-21(e), the Executive Director of ITS may negotiate a limitation on the liability to the State of prospective contractors provided such limitations afford the State reasonable protection and the limitation is approved by the State entity for whom the acquisition is being made. A Vendor who wishes to negotiate a limitation to their liability to the State under this RFP must provide a proposed limitation of liability in their response at the time of submission for the State’s consideration. However, the Vendor shall have no limitation on liability for claims related to the following items:

1. **Section VII: Technical Specifications, Item 4.2 shall be and hereby revised to read:**
   1. The evaluation will be conducted ~~in four stages as~~ follows:
      1. ~~Stage 1 –~~ Selection of Responsive/Valid Proposals – Each proposal will be reviewed to determine if it is sufficiently responsive to the RFP requirements to permit a complete evaluation. A responsive proposal must comply with the instructions stated in this RFP including, but not limited ~~with regard~~ to, content, organization/format, Vendor experience, submission via USB, mandatory requirements (if applicable), bond requirement (if applicable), timely delivery, and must ~~meet any mandatory requirement~~ be considered in competitive range (as detailed in the ITS Procurement Handbook). No evaluation points will be awarded in this stage. Failure to submit a complete and valid proposal may result in rejection of the proposal.
      2. ~~Stage 2 –~~ Non-cost Evaluation (all requirements excluding cost)
         1. Non-cost categories and possible point values are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Non-Cost Categories** | **Possible Points** |
| M&O Contractor/Key Personnel; Project/Resource Management | 20 |
| Maintenance & Operations SPIRIT Services; | 30 |
| Customer Support – General; Performance Management | 15 |
| **Maximum Possible Points** | **65** |

* + - 1. Proposals receiving ~~meeting~~ fewer than ~~90%~~80% of the total points allocated for ~~requirements in~~ the non-cost categories will ~~may~~ be eliminated from further consideration.
      2. ITS scores the non-cost categories on a 10-point scale~~, with 9 points for meeting the requirement. The ‘Meets Specs’ score for each category is 90% of the total points allocated for that category. For example, the Maintenance & Operations SPIRIT Services category was allocated 30 points; a proposal that fully met all requirements in that section would have scored 27 points. The additional 10% is used for a proposal that exceeds the requirement for an item in a way that provides additional benefits to the state~~.
    1. ~~Stage 3 –~~ Cost Evaluation
       1. Points will be assigned using the following formula:

(1-((B-A)/A))\*n

Where:

A = Total lifecycle cost of lowest valid proposal

B = Total lifecycle cost of proposal being scored

n = Maximum number of points allocated to cost for acquisition

* + - 1. Cost categories and maximum point values are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cost Category** | **Possible Points** |
| Lifecycle Cost | 30 |
| Change Order Rates | 5 |
| **Maximum Possible Points** | **35** |

* + 1. ~~Stage 4 –~~ Selection of the successful Vendor
       1. Demonstrations and Interviews
          1. At the discretion of the State, evaluators may request interviews, presentations, demonstrations, or discussions with any and all Vendors for the purpose of system overview and/or clarification or amplification of information presented in any part of the proposal.
          2. If requested, Vendors must be prepared to make demonstrations of system functionality and/or proposal clarifications to the evaluation team and its affiliates with seven calendar days of notice. Each presentation must be made by the project manager being proposed by the Vendor to oversee implementation of this project.
          3. Proposed key team members must be present at the demonstration. The evaluation team reserves the right to interview the proposed key team members during this visit/demonstration.
          4. Although demonstrations may be requested, the demonstration will not be allowed in lieu of a written proposal.
    2. Site Visits
       1. At the State’s option, Vendors that remain within a competitive range must be prepared to provide a reference site within seven calendar days of notification. If possible, the reference site should be in the Southeastern region of the United States. Vendor must list potential reference sites in the proposal.

1. **Section VII: Technical Specifications, Item 4.3 shall be and hereby revised to read:**

Final Quantitative Evaluation - Following any requested clarifications, BAFOs, presentations, demonstrations, and/or site visits, the Evaluation Team will re-evaluate any technical/functional scores as necessary. The technical/functional and cost scores will then be combined to determine the Vendor’s final score.

1. **Attachment A, Section I, General, A. How to Respond, Item 1 is modified as follows:**

Beginning with Item ~~29~~ 30, label and respond to each outline point in this section as it is labeled in the ~~RFP~~ Attachment A document.

1. **A new Attachment B, Business Associate Agreement shall be and hereby is added to the RFP documentation.**

The vendor must include in their proposal a response to each amended requirement listed above, using the same terminology as provided in the original requirements.

The following questions were submitted to ITS and are being presented as they were submitted, except to remove any reference to a specific vendor. This information should assist you in formulating your response.

**Question 1:** Attachment A, Section I. A. 1.: Please confirm the response should begin with Item 29 which is the last item under Section F, Current Environment on page 4.

**Response:** **Vendor responses should begin with Item 30, which is the first item under Section II. M&O Contractor/ Key Personnel in Attachment A. Please refer to Amendment Number 7.**

**Question 2:** Attachment A, Section I. A. 3.: Please confirm whether the Vendor must respond with “WILL COMPLY” or “EXCEPTION” to each point in Attachment A or each point beginning with Item 29 (or updated section or item number per question above) in Attachment A.

**Response:** **Beginning with Item 30, Vendor must respond with “Will Comply” or “Exception”, and include any detailed narrative to substantiate the response.**

**Question 3:** Attachment A, Section IV. A. 53.a.: Please clarify or provide examples of operational and reporting changes the contractor will be responsible for as a result of Maintenance and Enhancement (M&E) contractor actions.

**Response:** **An example of an operational and reporting change would be if the M&E contractor makes changes to the existing Vendor Module, the M&O contractor will be expected to provide reports based on updated/ changed variables and provide operational support.**

**Question 4:** Attachment A, Section IV. A. 53b.: Since this RFP does not include hosting services, please clarify what routine, unscheduled maintenance must be provided and approved.

**Response: The routine, unscheduled maintenance described here refers to maintenance performed by the M&O Contractors for their systems and databases. MSDH is not requiring approval for routine, unscheduled maintenance.**

**Question 5:** Attachment A, Section IV. A. 53c.: Since this RFP does not include hosting services, please clarify what emergency maintenance requires immediate notification.

**Response:** **The emergency maintenance described here refers to the maintenance performed by M&O Contractors for their systems and databases. MSDH is not requiring immediate notification emergency maintenance.**

**Question 6:** Attachment A, Section IV. A. 53d.: Since this RFP does not include hosting services, please clarify what emergency maintenance must be documented within 48 hours.

**Response:** **The emergency maintenance described here refers to the maintenance performed by M&O Contractors for their systems and databases.**

**Question 7:** Attachment A, Section IV. A. 53e.: Since this RFP does not include hosting services, please clarify what non-emergency system changes must be planned and implemented.

**Response: The emergency system changes described here refers to the changes performed by M&O Contractors for their systems and databases**.

**Question 8:** Attachment A, Section IV. E. 63a.: To mirror the production environment, will the Test Environment maintained by the contractor have access to the Conduent EBT Processor?

**Response:** **Yes.**

**Question 9:** Attachment A, Section V. A. 71.: What is the expected monthly volume of calls/emails/chats for the 24/7/365 support?

**Response: MSDH normal work hours are 8:00 am- 5:00 pm CST. MSDH WIC program will perform upgrades after hours twice a year and would possibly need M&O assistance during this timeframe**.

**Question 10:** ITS RFP Response Checklist: Is Item 6 applicable to this procurement?

**Response: Yes. ITS considered “Technical Specifications” to mean Section VII of the RFP, and Section VII incorporates the Attachment A into the RFP. Responding Vendors should submit a point-by-point response to Attachment A.**

**Question 11:** ITS RFP Response Checklist: For the responses to the requirements in item 5 (RFP Questionnaire, RFP Section VI), may the vendor respond using its own proposal template rather than inserting response content into the RFP form itself?

**Response: Yes, Vendor can provide responses in their own template; however, Vendor must not alter any of the original text. See RFP Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 8.**

**Question 12:** Attachment A, Page 1: The RFP number in Attachment A is 4534, but in the main RFP Document it states as RFP Number 4324. Please confirm 4534 is the correct RFP number.

**Response:** **Yes.** **Please see Amendment Number 1 above.**

**Question 13:** Attachment A, Section V. Customer Support – General: Can the state confirm the M&O Contractor only performs Level 2 and 3 support for the SPIRIT application?

**Response:** **The M&O Contractor performs all levels of support outlined in the RFP. This includes Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

**Question 14:** Attachment A, Section V. Customer Support – General: Can the state share the number of tickets/calls/emails monthly that are submitted to the M&O contractor for support?

**Response: When there are not peak issues, MSDH sends approximately 15-25 tickets/calls/emails to the M&O contractor per month. If there are new processes implemented that cause issues, there could be approximately 50 issues sent to the M&O contractor per month.**

**Question 15:** Attachment A, Section IV, F., 67: Can the state please estimate the number of ad hoc reports that are requested of the M&O contractor monthly? Annually?

**Response:** **Historically, MSDH has requested about 60 ad hoc reports annually.**

**Question 16:** Attachment A, Section III, E., 63a.: Can the state confirm if the production mirror environment is hosted by the M&O contractor?

**Response:** **Yes.**

**Question 17:** Attachment A, Section VII. Other – End of Contract Provisions: Can the state provide the existing M&O contactor’s transition out plan?

**Response:** **No.**

**Question 18:** Attachment A, Section VII. Other – End of Contract Provisions: Will existing reports be transferred to the new M&O contractor?

**Response:** **MSDH WIC Program will have access to all reports provided by the current M&O Contractor.**

**Question 19:** Attachment A, Section III, F. SPIRIT Reports: What technology stack is currently used for the existing reports?

**Response:** **Currently, MSDH is using existing reports within the Management Information System (MIS). MSDH WIC is in the process of moving towards SPIRIT WEB and limited reports will be generated from this system. Within the current M&O contract, reports will be provided via SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS). Historically, the M&O contractor provided reports via Excel document spreadsheets that link to SQL stored procedures on the state’s SQL server.**

**Question 20:** Attachment A, Section II, B. Key Personnel: Can the state confirm that the QA Specialist scope of testing only covers canned and ad hoc reports developed under this contract?

**Response:** **No, the Quality Assurance (QA) Specialist scope of testing would also include any day-to-day issue fixes that are needed by MSDH.**

**Question 21:** Attachment A, Section II, B. Key Personnel: Please confirm that the QA Specialist role is not expected to assist the state with testing M&E SPIRIT Releases.

**Response:** **The QA specialist is not expected to assist the state with M&E testing of new releases. Testing of new releases from the M&E is solely the State’s responsibility.**

**Question 22:** Attachment A, Section IV, D. SPIRIT Service Providers – Responsible Parties: Can the state confirm if the M&O Contractor is responsible for providing laptops? If so, is it to staff at both the State Agency and Local Agencies?

**Response:** **The M&O Contractor is not responsible for providing laptops to the State Agency or Local Agency.**

**Question 23:** Attachment A, Section IV, E. SPIRIT Test Environment Management: Can the state confirm if the M&O Contractor is to host a test environment?

**Response:** **Yes, it is the responsibility of the M&O Contractor to host a test environment to ensure quality fixes are being provided to the State as needed.**

**Question 24:** RFP, Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements: Does the state expect to receive a printed copy of the response, in addition to the flash drive?

**Response:** **Printed copies are not expected.**

**Question 25:** RFP, Section II: Proposal Submission Requirements: 9.11 states that the vendor must respond to each requirement within the technical specifications with how the proposal meets or exceeds the requirement. However, Section VII Technical Specifications is comprised of information only such as the proposal schedule and evaluation criteria that are not requirements to which we can respond, let alone meet or exceed.

**Response:** **The Technical Specifications mentioned here are considered to be Attachment A.**

**Question 26:** Attachment A, Section I, General – A How to Respond, 1: The requirement states “Beginning with Item 29, label and respond to each outline point in this section as it is labeled in the RFP.” However, item number 29 is informational, regarding the current server specifications. Please confirm we should start with item 30 instead.

**Response:** **Vendor responses should begin with Item 30, which is the first item under Section II. M&O Contractor/ Key Personnel in Attachment A. Please refer to Amendment Number 7.**

**Question 27:** Attachment A, Section IV, D. SPIRIT Service Providers – Responsible Parties, 59: "Providing appropriate security to meet applicable State and Federal requirements to protect the integrity and confidentiality of program data." This is listed as a shared responsibility across all parties. However, the M&O contractor is only consulting in the implementation areas related to security. What is our exact shared responsibility?

**Response:** **The M&O contractor will have access to all MSDH WIC Participants' data, and a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) covers the awarded vendor’s responsibilities. Please see the attached MSDH BAA, which is hereby attached to the RFP as Attachment B. The BAA must be signed by the awarded vendor.**

**Question 28:** Attachment A, Section IV, E. SPIRIT Test Environment Management, 63: "For the test environment, the M&O Contractor will provide the following minimum services: a. Maintain an active test environment that mirrors the production environment; and b. Other services as requested by MSDH." If it is confirmed that this is hosted by the M&O contractor, then please further define "mirrors". Is the environment mirrored just in hardware/software specifications?

**Response:** **The test environment must be hosted by the M&O contractor. The software specifications must be applicable to MSDH production environment to be able to provide any day-to day fixes relevant to the state’s environment.**

**Question 29:** Attachment A, Section IV, E. SPIRIT Test Environment Management: If the awarded M&O Contractor is to host a test environment that mirrors production data, how is the data to be synchronized?

**Response:** **MSDH WIC will provide a database backup weekly of the production environment that can be restored to the M&O test environment.**

**Question 30:** Attachment A, Section VI, B. Encryption. b.: "For engagements where the Vendor stores non-public data, the data shall be encrypted at rest. The key location and other key management details will be discussed and negotiated by both parties." Will the storage hardware be providing at rest encryption, or will the contractor be required to provide some type of software encryption?

**Response:** **The Contractor is required to provide software encryption for data at rest.**

**Question 31:** Attachment A, Section IV, B. SPIRIT Database Support: Will the M&O Contractor be required to provide full DBA management of the database and database software, or will MSDH have their own DBAs?

**Response:** **MSDH has its own DBAs. The M&O Contractor must have DBAs available, as needed, to assist with any issues that arise.**

**Question 32:** Attachment A, Section IV, D. SPIRIT Service Providers – Responsible Parties, 61: "Client-Side Software (Desktop/Laptop and Peripherals). Currently, Gainwell provides software support for SPIRIT Legacy software applications (laptops, personal computers (PCs), etc. The awarded contractor will provide support to Client-side SPIRIT Legacy software and other services." Will there be any requirements for onsite or hardware support for client devices (clinic or state users)?

**Response:** **No.**

**Question 33:** Attachment A, V. Customer Support – General: Please confirm the state provides Tier I support for clinic users through its own helpdesk and it is not the responsibility of the awarded bidder to provide Tier I support.

**Response:** **Tiers are not mentioned in the RFP. MSDH WIC provides tier 1 support for local clinics through its own call center.**

RFP responses are due on August 15, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time).

Attachment B: MSDH Business Associate Agreement

cc: ITS Project File Number 44596