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TO: MASTER CONTRACTORS

FROM: Dorothy M. Richburg
Procurement Officer

RE: Pre-Proposal Conference
TORFP NO. R00B4400006
MARYLAND ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING SYSTEM (MARS)

DATE: February 25, 2014

**YOU SHOULD RECEIVE 27 PAGES and
In addition to the attendance sheet, attachment 5, updated cost proposal and
tentative timeline
IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL THE PAGES, PLEASE CALL 410-767-0628
OR EMAIL drichburg@msde.state.md.us
THANK YOU.**

Attached are the following documents:

1. Minutes from the Pre-Proposal Conference held on Friday, February 7, 2014;
2. Questions and Responses;
3. Attachment 5;
4. Revised Cost Proposal;
5. Tentative Timeline; and
6. Attendance Sheet

**PROPOSALS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN
2:00 PM EDT, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2014**

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2595
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410-333-2017 (Fax)

TORFP NO. R00B4400006
MARYLAND ACCOUNTABILITY AND
REPORTING SYSTEM (MARS)

Received By _____
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Vendor _____

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PLEASE E-MAIL, FAX OR MAIL THIS TO:

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MS. RICHBURG:

Let me take this opportunity to say welcome to our MARS Pre-Proposal Conference. MARS is for our Maintenance and Operation Report.

I'm Dorothy Richburg, I'm the Procurement Officer. At this time I'm going to give you some instructions.

A colleague will conduct our Pre-Proposal Conference. We will first have our introductions, I will ask that you will state your names and the companies that you're representing, after which we will have Anthony Palcher or Robin Ziegler, or both of them, to give us an overview of this procurement.

After which you will have an opportunity to ask as many questions as you like. We will conduct the question and answer period round robin style. So I would ask that you would be respectful. Ask one question at a time, unless it's a follow-up. Then we'll go around the room.

I have the room scheduled until 1 o'clock. So we can stay as long as you like. Once this has completed, you're welcome to stay in the room and do network if you like.

I know the Disney on Ice is here today, so parking and leaving is going to be a little hectic. So you're welcome to stay as long as you like.

We have with us today, Doug, who is with the Conference Reporting Services. Doug is here strictly for the purposes of taking the minutes.

The minutes will be transcribed and emailed to you hopefully by the end of, I'm not going to say next week because it's supposed to snow, right?

COURT REPORTER:

Please no, not any more snow.

MS. RICHBURG:

Oh, it's not going to snow any more. Okay. Well, we're going to say by the week of the 17th. If I can get them out by the end of next week, we will. That's what we will shoot for. But no later than that Monday or Tuesday of the following week.

If you have any additional questions, if you go back to your office or over the weekend if you're reading this, please email me your questions as soon as possible. I would like to include them in the minutes.

However, you know the proposals are due Wednesday, March the 12th, no later than 2:00 p.m. If you email me a question on March 11th, I will answer it.

So I would try to answer, but please try to be mindful and get your questions in as soon as possible.

So with all that said, I'm going to start with introductions here with Gail and we will work our way around.

MS. ROBINSON:

I'm Gail Robinson. I'm one of the business owners with School and Community Nutrition Programs.

MS. RICHBURG:

I'm Dorothy Richburg. I'm the Procurement Officer.

MS. ZIEGLER:

I'm Robin Ziegler, I'm the project sponsor.

MR. PALCHER:

I'm Tony Palcher, I'm the Project Manager for MARS.

MR. WANCOWICZ:

Bob Wancowicz, I work in the Nutrition Office and I'm the Financial Manager.

MR. BLACKBURN:

James Blackburn, Procurement.

QUESTIONS – ANSWERS--CLARIFICATIONS

MS. RICHBURG:

Sir, I'm going to start here with you.

(INTRODUCTIONS)

MR. KENNY:

Good morning. My name is Gary Kenny, I'm a Project Manager here at MSDE.

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay. There is an attendance sheet that's going around. So I would ask that each of you will please sign in.

Okay. One thing that I have failed to mention. There's a 25 percent MBE goal for this procurement and you have sub goals so that was explained in your key information sheet. So I'm asking you to please take a look at that.

So with that said, I'm going to turn it over to Robin and Tony.

MR. PALCHER:

Okay. I'll speak as to what we're trying to accomplish here with this Task Order. The MARS Project has been operating under O&M capacity for the last 14 months. The current agreement is under CATS II, and is due to expire at the end of May 2014.

So this contract is to roll in continued support for the MARS application. MARS is sponsored by the Federal Government, the USDA, and every administration tries to put their stamp on various products and projects that they sponsor and MARS is no different.

So that's the real need for O&M. MARS is functional and stable, Federal Government requirements change as well as technology and local government mandates. Additionally they are new programs to expand participation on the horizon.

Currently MARS is assists with the monitoring and distribution of roughly, 7 and 13 million dollars a monthly in reimbursements to local agencies in the state. This number fluctuates because not all programs are on the same calendar cycle. This proposed contract, is Task Order driven; because we have limited foresight as to what mandated and technology updates will be required from the USDA or the State Legislature or our customers during the life of the contract.

Upon notice to proceed there will be basic Task Orders to handle production problems, transition plans, and status reporting. These Task Orders will meant to cover start-up and daily

production support reported by the MARS Help Desk. Any issues requiring extensive efforts will be assign a specific Task Order, and will be tracked that fix through the process status reporting.

Again, it is a not to exceed type of Task Order. So the dollar amount that we finalize in award of the contract will be the maximum value of the contract. The amount of work will be driven by demand. The dollar value will vary from month to month.

We've identified critical labor categories. We feel these resources will be what is needed to start the team and to maintain continuity.

We understand that people come and go in the process and that additional resources will not be hired at the beginning of the contract. So there was no need to fill up the interview with all the labor categories described.

So we have broken it down into those few critical labor categories. The remaining labor categories, will be brought on as needed after the notice to proceed. However, when you bring people on to the project, that person will have to meet the minimum requirements specified in that resume.

So any questions about what we're trying to accomplish here?

ATTENDEE:

Are the qualifications for the --

MS. RICHBURG:

Let me ask a question. Hold it. Excuse me. Is this going to be part of the overview or just part of your questions?

ATTENDEE:

I guess I had a question regarding the labor categories. I could wait.

MS. RICHBURG:

Let's just wait until we get to all your questions and answers.

ATTENDEE:

Okay.

MR. PALCHER:

All right I guess I should have asked are there any questions about the overview?

MS. RICHBURG:

Robin, do you have anything you want to add?

MS. ZIEGLER:

No, I think Tony's put it all together.

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay. We just have two distinguished gentlemen to grace us with their presence. So I'm going to ask if they would introduce themselves.

(INTRODUCTIONS)

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay. We're going to get ready to entertain our questions and I'm going to start with this

gentleman here on my right and I'm going to work all the way around. And I'm going to ask you once again if you will introduce yourself this time and state your name.

MR. SEKORA:(Phonetic)

I'm V.C. Sekora from International Software Systems ...

MS. RICHBURG: No, when you have a question.

ATTENDEE:

There are some documents, for example like certain documents which are software compatible which means (inaudible) must have licensed software to prepare the items (inaudible) part of this assignment. So similarly, like are there any other software's that you want the TO contractor to be, already have it.

MR. PALCHER:

No. We pretty much just described our environment so that you knew what we would be using to read any documents that you sent to us. So we understand that there's a lot of different documents out there that can produce documents that are compatible such as ErWIN and Word and Excel and such. So the Task Order was describing what our environment was about.

ATTENDEE: Okay. And --

MS. RICHBURG: Is the final question --

ATTENDEE: It's a second question.

MS. RICHBURG: Okay. Let's wait and...

ATTENDEE: Sure. (Inaudible)

COURT REPORTER:

I can't hear.

ATTENDEE: Operation and Maintenance...

MS. RICHBURG:

Can you say who you are again. I'm sorry.

ATTENDEE:

Yes. (Inaudible) from International Software Systems.

Is the Operation and Maintenance being done as a desk person business or do you want to give it in a remote location or (inaudible) access?

A.

Access right now is through VPN. The Maryland State Department of Education is also implementing a use of universal access gateway. So remote programming, the only requirement is that they be located in the United States.

ATTENDEE: Okay.

MS. RICHBURG: But that remote may not be ...

Q. So can we operate from our business location or do we need to send our ...

A. Yes, the current contract works that way. The people work from the vendors locations.

Q. Okay.

A. We do have occasional needs where people do come on site to either meet with OIT and physically troubleshoot issues in the computer room or at the desktops or something like that. But web access and stuff like that are tried first.

Q. I'm Ash Kapoor(phonetic) with Advanced Digital Systems. I have a two-part question. Question number one, is of course, I did do some research but I just want to confirm.

Who's the existing incumbent, number one? Part two question is, very rarely, not really, very few times we see an RFP or rarely, let me put it, rarely we see an RFP like this.

The job specs, you made it so specific, that needs to have five years of this. Four years of this. Three years of this. One year of this. Even the contractor should have, the vendor should have... what's the existing relationship with the team we are proposing.

So we were scratching our head that are you guys, I mean incumbent, would have an edge. The incumbent would have everything, like five years of this experience, four years of this experience, three years of this experience.

So we were (inaudible) when we saw something like this. So what is the rationale behind it?

MS. RICHBURG:

The incumbent is the Canton Group. And the requirements are what we need to have. And we are actively and openly, you know, this is a competitive procurement.

I can let Tony speak as well, but the requirements, the minimum requirements, describe what we need to complete the work on the Operation and Maintenance.

So this is open. And yeah, we do have an incumbent and I can say this. The current incumbent is not the original contractor for the MARS project. We had a open procurement; and the incumbent who was also the developer did not get it the award.

MR PALCHER:

And the requirements for the contractor in this Task Order are not much different than they were in our first initial CATS-II O&M effort. However we did include additional labor categories. We want people that are working for the contractor to know what the contractor's policies are.

If you are Project Manager, you usually have full control of the project, so if you're working for a company, you need to understand their policies when you're making decisions.

So that's the real reason for having the team have local knowledge of each other. Also, when Project Managers and are assigning work they know their strengths and the weaknesses of members on their team, so they can produce accurate estimates.

That's another reason why you want to have a previous partnership. They don't have to have that long-term relationships, but they should know a little bit about their team when they're forecasting time lines and schedules.

The other reason for having the contractor have experience in managing those types of contract, is because, we don't want our partnership to add value and we not want to have to train somebody on how to do manage an Indefinite Demand O&M contract. We want somebody that has experience and can also bring value to our efforts.

MS. RICHBURG:

Did that answer your question?

Q. Yes. Thank you. But you know, as an MBE, I don't have a bench. If I don't have the required resource, I would go and hire, I would bring a contingent hire.

I mean I know, and again, I'm speaking for our company.

MR. PALCHER:

Understood.

Q. We know, technically, of course, you know, we have all the right resource, who would screen, who would know the resource has all the right skills. And once the contract has been awarded, you know, this resource will do the work.

Now when you, even in today's economic environment, nobody has people, very few have people who are sitting on the bench and who would propose and who would have previous relationship.

So that would give me some kind of a, you know, I would assume that would give me some kind of a disadvantage that I have not worked with the person previously, because I'm bringing that person as a contingent hire.

But I know this person has all the right skills. Once the contract has been awarded to us, this person will do just perfect. Okay. Thank you.

MR. PALCHER:

Thanks for your input, and it is a matter of record. However, I'm not going to add any more information than what I've already added.

MS. RICHBURG:

Thank you. Brian?

Q. Brian Zernholt, Software Consortium. I see this time you're using the break-in of the MBE goal. Is it going to stay, is it broken down in specific categories?

A. Yes, sir. There are sub goals.

Q. Sub goals.

A. Yes, they are going to stay.

Q. Okay.

MS. RICHBURG:

I think it's 25 percent overall. And so then if the sub goal is 17.

A. Yeah, because they didn't know...so many individuals, it's kind of tough to break it down. So many different companies. That's why we just went with.

MS. RICHBURG:

If you're having a problem fulfilling that, you can ask for a waiver.

A. That is usually the process.

MS. RICHBURG:

But I'm asking, we didn't look when we did our worksheet, the MBE is based on, a standardized worksheet, and MSDE did find that there were several ample supply of vendors in each of the labor categories. I mean the sub goal categories.

So please do your best. I'm sorry Brian. Did I answer your question?

Q. Oh, yes, you did. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG:

Ryan, would you introduce yourself?

MR. ACHREYA:

Naryan Achreya from I-Cube Systems. We are an MBE. I don't have a question. But just a summation.

MS. RICHBURG:

Uh-HUH.

MR. ACHREYA:

And since you know what is the requirement, how many resources you need. And you have to meet the MBE goals. It would be very helpful if the goals ...(Inaudible) You can set 25 percent. For example, for a disabled veteran or whatever it is.

So that can be easy for anybody who is bidding on that to meet the requirement, because given all the total requirement of how much percentage, three percent for example, I think (inaudible) company or something, it's hard to meet three percent on the total goal.

So we had to go (inaudible). So it is okay, it is a good thing to have that 25 percent MBE goal which narrows down who the contract goes to, but you can set one of two categories like (inaudible) 15 percent; 10 percent on something else. So that is a very clear achievement going for you for the contract.

Just a solution going forward.

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay. I like that. Thank you. We'll take that under advisement. Okay. Mike?

Q. Yes. Mike Boyle with TCC Software Solutions. So I just wanted to clarify. Prime contractor, all you need to submit resumes of the four key resources identified in the TORFP and then (inaudible) for those resources.

A. Yes. Okay. Because we realize that other resources are going to come and go during the life of this contract. But we feel that the key resources are probably going to have the most

longevity and the most interaction with us.

Q. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG:

Let me just add something to what Tony said. When you're asked on oral presentation and we require those four persons to come, you cannot submit a substitute at that time. And when your contracts start, you cannot submit a substitute.

If you do, we will cancel the contract.

Q. A quick follow-up question.

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes, sir.

Q. Are you happy with the employees of the current incumbent? Do you want to replace them?

MS. RICHBURG:

That's a good question, but, yes, we are happy with them. Are you asking if we are happy with the incumbent or employees?

Q. Incumbent and employees?

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes, sir. We are.

Q. Do you want to retain a couple of them or do you need to have a substitute...

MS. RICHBURG:

That's up to the people here. I mean we're not looking to retain them.

A. There's no one rule.

Q. (Inaudible)

MS. RICHBURG:

No, sir. No, sir. Okay. Mandita?

Q. I guess, Mike asked this question. But I just want to have a clear understanding that are certain other labor. Mandita Giudodosi with AP Ventures. Certain other labor categories listed which I understand are not a part of the key personnel.

Is that addition by you have listed, is that something you would like to see as posted, the team would have? Or what is the reasoning behind just saying other labor categories. Just for information perhaps?

A. While we'll be using those labor categories of programmers and whatnot, but they'll also be part of a pool. Demand for resources will fluctuate. At times you may require multiple

resources and other time you may need less than a fulltime resource for a particular labor category.

So we just feel that anyone brought onto the team as part of that labor category just needs to meet those resume requirements.

We understand that sometimes with a flood of requests we get from the USDA, that we've had multiple programmers working on multiple Task Orders at the same time.

So it really wouldn't make sense just to bring in one person and then knowing that there's going to be two or three of, you know, at the end of a year's time.

And again, we understand you're going to experience turnover in the team as well. So those resumes are meant as a guide for recruitment as people transition on and off the team.

Q. So then you would like seeing those individual resumes although they are not part of the key personnel. Is that true?

A. If you want to put them your proposal that's fine. But they're not part of our evaluation process for the award of the contract at this point.

Q. Thank you.

Q. This is a follow-up for clarification on that. As part of the key personnel, we actually saw there are four people. And are we expecting only four resumes for part of their evaluation or do we have to do like minimum meeting all criteria for all qualifications, eight people ...

A. No, we're only going to interview four people.

MS. RICHBURG:

Or evaluate four.

Q. So as part of the proposal we have to only provide resumes for key resources...

A. Right. Right. But if you were to get the contract and you were going to tell us who the programmers were on first Task Orders, they would have to meet the qualifications listed the task order.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay.

MALE VOICE:

No questions.

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay. I'm going go back to you, sir.

Q. In the Section 2.8.15 on page 24.

MS. RICHBURG:

2.8.15.

Q. Work Hours. So work hours start from 7:30 till 6:00 p.m. for business support and the core business hours start 8:30 to 5.

So however, when I look at the (inaudible) I don't see any people, something like help desk or something like that.

A. The project has its own help desk.

Q. Okay.

A. So basically, those hours are to let you know when you can expect communications from us. The help desk could come in 7:30 and see that there's an issue. They'll probably turn it in and report it to the O&M support contractor.

Q. Okay.

A. The MARS Help Desk does some troubleshooting with MSDE/OIT in advance of reporting an issue. Our first efforts are to validate the issues and verify not an issue on our end before turning over to the O&M support vendor.

Q. Okay. So which means any of these eight people can be prepared to receive communications ...(inaudible).

A. We will use what tool you have to log issue, we usually follow that with an email to the Project manager or designate.

And again, the core business hours, that you need to have a meeting with us. That's what that's there for, is to let you know that it's between 8:30 and 5:00 p.m.

But we have external customers and that's why the reason it goes to 6:00 p.m. is our help desk and stuff like that would be receiving emails from them or phone calls from them or OIT maybe saying well, hey, we just noticed this as having an issue.

Is it okay if we can take the server down and we'll probably need your assistance on that. Take it down with the help of them restarting it.

Q. So following up on that, so is there any tech support that is expected or anticipated from the personnel in terms of their management perspective. And do we work the weekends?

A. There's no commitment to weekend efforts of support. However, there may be times when schedule requirements require people to work the weekends, but that depends on staffing on your end.

Q. That's what I thought. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes, sir.

Q. You had spoken about can you substitute the people once proposed. One of the challenges we have seen lately working with the State of Maryland or other contracts as, you know, you propose a team and sometimes the program team takes a couple of months and then you expect the

same people to come for the interview.

And if you don't propose the same or the same team is not available, you're thrown out of the race. So my question to you is, what is a time frame like assuming, you know, the due date is March 12th.

We submit our response. What's the anticipated date for orals? And what's the anticipated date for award of the contract. So just to make sure that, you know, we can plan it accordingly.

A. Our current schedule is within two weeks of receiving the technical proposals is to evaluate for minimum qualifications and schedule meetings, interview meetings.

The interview meetings would take place in the third week after the proposal date's due. Our selection process would then be done within 10 days of that.

Our goal is to have it about 30 days of overlap with the current vendor and any new vendor, so that any new vendor selected, so that there can be some reasonable time for knowledge transfer, because the CATS contract does expire at the end of May 2014.

So we'd like to have an award and contract in place the last week of April.

A. So it is kind of fast track.

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes, It's a tight schedule.

MR. PALCHER:

I'm sorry, I may have said the first week of April, but meant the last week of April or first week of May.

MS. RICHBURG:

So, the last week in April.

Q. Okay. So essentially it's 30 days from the two weeks of orals. Is that correct?

A. Right. Because we have to give notice to proceed from DOiT once our selection is made and we don't know what their backlog is.

We can assume that it would be an ending of CATS II, And they will be bogged down there at DOiT.

Q. Just a suggestion, Dorothy.

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes, sir.

Q. Sometimes what happens is, you know, you propose four key resources.

MS. RICHBURG:

Uh-huh.

Q. And from orals, yes, they're available. By the time, you know, the project kicks off, one person, sometimes, you know, you have a team. The paycheck is not coming, you know.

MS. RICHBURG:

Right.

Q. The person is going to take the first job available.

MS. RICHBURG:

I understand.

Q. So could you, would you be flexible, just in case you propose four resources, one person is off, has taken another job. Would you be flexible that we can substitute?

A. We discussed this with DOiT and unfortunately we cannot. The four key personnel are the ones we must have. I'm sorry. We must have the team.

Q. Even at the —

MS. RICHBURG:

Even at orals and at the start of the awarding the contract. Because that's who we're basing the work on, the award on.

A. To be fair. To be fair, the way it was explained to us, we would have to actually go back and interview everyone over again.

Q. But, but, you know.

MS. RICHBURG:

I understand what you're saying.

Q. You can still interview the person if that person doesn't meet the — you can always...

MS. RICHBURG:

Do you know, sometimes we have seen where, and I understand. People, if you're not working you're going to take the first job. But these are the four people, the candidates that we're basing the award on. On their strengths and their knowledge and expertise.

Now it would not be fair to have to go back and interview someone else. You know, because that second team who ranked number two, you know, we could award it to them.

A. Right.

MS. RICHBURG:

We would still have to go through the whole evaluation process, go down to DOiT. I mean and so you have the same delay. You know, I'm sorry about the delay. It's the bureaucracy.

Q. Okay.

MS. RICHBURG:

So when you get someone, you don't let them know that we plan to make an award by the end of April, 1st of May at the latest. So you know, so they must be available or willing to commit

to that time frame.

ATTENDEE: Okay.

MS. RICHBURG:

Now we know that throughout the life of the contract, one of those four people may accept other employment. And then we will have just, you know, but then you have the contract and then we would have to, accept interview and review a resume for a substitution of personnel. But to award the contract we cannot accept a substitution.

ATTENDEE: Okay. I'm just going to add something to the gentleman's --

MS. RICHBURG: Yes, sir.

ATTENDEE: What he said in terms of the MBE.

We were also thinking that, you know, the 25 percent, 8 percent is this, 2 percent is this. How am I give a 2 percent out of the contract to a Hispanic company and 8 percent to an African-American company, how am I going to do the math here. So if in future --

MS. RICHBURG:

Well, the number of hours that, you know, for that resource. You would make them a number of hours.

ATTENDEE: How would I motivate the sub- contractor, hey, come and be a subcontractor to me because he or she will think that it's not worth my time, you know, doing all the recruitment and this is the challenge we face, I face right now.

MS. RICHBURG: I understand.

ATTENDEE: Something, you know.

MS. RICHBURG:

That's something we can think about.

ATTENDEE: Yeah. Just my, you know, two cents.

MS. RICHBURG: Okay. I appreciate that.

ATTENDEE: Sure.

MS. RICHBURG: Brian:

ATTENDEE: No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Ryan?

ATTENDEE: No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Mike?

MR. BOYLE: No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Mandita?

MS. GIUDODOSI: No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Luis?

ATTENDEE:

One quick question, kind of an MBE one, I know, because one of the four main people and then some resources will come in. How will you be tracking it, it's like the hours for the MBE. Are they going to be like for the total life of the contract? You know, are you going to do it monthly, you know, make sure --

MS. RICHBURG: For the life of the contract.

ATTENDEE: Okay.

MS. RICHBURG:

But if we see, I'm just saying for example, year three, you have not used your, your MBE participation. Maybe even year two.

ATTENDEE: Right.

MS. RICHBURG: That gets monitored very, very closely.

ATTENDEE: All right.

MS. RICHBURG: And she's going to email you. Hey, what's going on. You haven't used your MBE.

ATTENDEE: So it'll actually happen before two years, trust me.

(Laughter)

MS. RICHBURG:

If you're on a project and you're going to say well they're going to do XYZ, we'll just, you know, maybe 7 or 8 months down the road and we know that, MBE won't be used until then. Or you can explain it to her if she emails you. But you will get an email from her, believe me.

ATTENDEE: Okay.

MS. RICHBURG: Okay. I'm going to come back around.

Q. So there are SLA's actually we normally follow as part of the response, usually it's list...

So from that standpoint we have to respond to this proposition also we have an end date. Is there any kind of a SLA which also applicable for you to respond, do you have any obligation to come back to the vendors?

Because we are actually banking upon the resources for a couple, two months, three months, sometimes four months. Which is actually, people are going from paycheck to paycheck, living on paycheck to paycheck. Basically that's actually defeats the whole objective.

And also the disadvantage for the vendors to come in and offer their resources. That will be the advantage for incumbent. Maybe because their resources are being deployed at the location.

But when a new person, a new vendor come in and offering the services. So having the people waited so long will defeat their objective.

MS. RICHBURG:

I'm sorry. I didn't understand your question. I mean I understand what you're saying.

Q. That's what I actually wanted to understand. Is there any kind of service from your side?

MS. RICHBURG:

Is there any kind of --

Q. We would get a response back?

MR. PALCHER:

Yes, we would certainly let people know when the interview process schedules are underway and let people know whether they made the interview process or not.

MS. RICHBURG: We have a tentative schedule now for the oral.

MR. PALCHER: Right.

MS. RICHBURG: We have a tentative schedule for that week.

MR. PALCHER: Yes, and we can share that schedule as part of the replies to questions and these minutes.

MS. RICHBURG:

We're going to put that in the minutes when it goes out. We will let you know so you can

--

MR. PALCHER:

Are you also talking about the programming stuff and what, how fast we let you know ...

Q. From a procurement standpoint.

MR. PALCHER:

Yes, we can share the schedule as part of the meeting minutes.

Q. Yeah, that would really -- because I can see only the closing date and no timeline beyond that.

MS. RICHBURG:

We'll share them with you in the minutes.

MS. RICHBURG:

We will give that to you.

Q. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG:

Tony will supply a tentative schedule.

MR. PALCHER:

As far as notice to proceed, DOiT holds the key to that. But we can include it in the minutes when we expect to give our decision to do it, so that you would know when the clock would start ticking on their end. If that helps.

Q. Yes. That would give us actually information... for applying...

MS. RICHBURG:

A person who's awarded the contract, they would know that because they would have a contract to sign. So they will know that while we're working on the paperwork with DOiT.

MR. PALCHER:

But I think what you're looking for is when you're recruiting team members you would like to give them a tentative start date.

Q. Exactly. So they could go back to the ...

Q. If I'm leaning upon the resources and there might be a pool, wherein I would ask them to actually stay in the pool, because given my business management saying that yeah, I have an opportunity. I'm blocking these resources. I'm going to take the course.

MR. PALCHER:

There again, there's no problem. We will give the dates as part of the minutes.

MS. RICHBURG:

The time is say in April.

Q. Yeah, there is actually as much, the transition end date wasn't mentioned...
So we can work backwards but again from your --

MR. PALCHER:

I understand, there's a big gap from in there deadline to the ward. So we'll list those milestones.

Q. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG:

When we email the minutes, we'll give you a tentative schedule. But I'm going to go on record saying don't hold me to that.

MR. PALCHER: Yes. There's weather issues and stuff like that.

MS. RICHBURG:

Because we have so many procurements that we're working on as well as DOiT. And we may get an extension and we may have to stretch that out.

Like I say, don't hold me to it. I'm going to do the best we can humanly possible.

Q. All right. Indications will definitely work for us actually ...

MS. RICHBURG:

Okay. Question?

Q. Now, in regards to the response, I have seen sometimes that proof of active certification, do you need to include it as a part of our response. The certifications that you need?

A. For the PM?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes.

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes, you do. A copy of that and the license and number.

Q. Number, oh, okay.

MS. RICHBURG:

A copy okay. Ash?

Q. You asked for in deliverables you would like to see some deliverables from the resources. Sometimes it becomes difficult because it's all, you know, they move, sometimes, you know, folks have signed the NDA, those kinds of things.

It's very confidential and sometimes it becomes hard to convince a resource, a contingent hired to, hey, bring your deliverables, show your project management plan or those kind of things.

Could you be -- any suggestion is?

A. It doesn't have to be live data. It could be a prototype. We obviously do not want to violate disclosure agreements, or copyrights.

We would like to see some similar work and work that they're proud of and so that they can talk to some of the benefits and the issues that they faced in that development.

So it doesn't have to be a live working demo if that's what you're talking about because we know it's confidential data. There's also institutional knowledge and copyrights.

MS. ZIEGLER:

I just want to say that, Tony's right. It doesn't have to be live, but PowerPoint or the Deck doesn't go quite as far as seeing a live demo.

MR. PALCHER: The sample must have some details or flow.

MS. ZIEGLER: Some kind of demonstration.

MR. PALCHER: Even if they modified it to just be running on their laptop so they could display it on the screen as a standalone demonstration.

Q. So that would be acceptable. Okay.

MR. PALCHER: Yes, thanks you.

ATTENDEE: Brian. No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Okay. Ryan?

ATTENDEE: No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Mike?

ATTENDEE: No questions.

MS. RICHBURG: Mandita?

ATTENDEE: No questions.

Q. I would like to ask regarding the resumes. The person, the key person has to be interviewed at the time of the award.

If you are given a contingent offer to an individual, can you produce multiple resumes for the position? Where if one back out we have another backup.

MR. PALCHER: One for each key personnel.

Q. If you extend the contingent offer to an individual and if he does not ... at the time of the interview, can you at the time of proposal itself, can you give a backup, a couple of resumes?

MR. PALCHER: There is no setup. We can only accepting one resume per category.

MS. RICHBURG: We're accepting one, no backup.

Q. No backup.

MS. RICHBURG: On a contingent.

MR. PALCHER: The conflict would be identifying which one would we use to rank in the evaluation.

MS. RICHBURG:

Yes. Are both of them going to be evaluated? You know, would you bring us ...

MR. PALCHER:

Because we have paperwork and scores to submit and it's only for that position so we don't get multiple columns, and what happens if the one that drove up the ranking is not available.

MS. RICHBURG:

So to be fair.

MR. PALCHER: I understand you're trying to mitigate the risk of resource availability, but we need to be consistent..

MS. RICHBURG: Right. But to be fair to everyone I think we're just going to do one.

MR. PALCHER: Yes, one..

Q. Sure. No multiple individuals?

MS. RICHBURG: No multiples, sorry. Ash?

Q. Average of task orders. What has been the duration in the past like the supplemental or the additional resources. Has it been three months, 6 months, 8 months?

A. Sure. We have through our business schedule we have quarterly releases already scheduled. However, with the USDA playing catchup on their policies and procedures, just last month we've had releases every two weeks, because we had to get certain things done.

Those Task Orders take anywhere from 30 days to implement from development, FIX and UAT to production to 6 months. So there's a variance in there. We have a large library of task orders and we worked with the vendor to schedule where we can fit things in.

Q. So essentially it's on an average four to 6 months or maybe more?

A. No, nothing that long. On average I would say it's about 60 days.

Q. The additional?

A. The Task Orders open and close in 60 days.

Q. Oh. Sorry.

A. And then unless it's an immediate need, it waits till the quarterly release.

Q. But otherwise, these four key resources will be there throughout the duration of the contract, but additional resources could be 60 days or --

A. Yeah, the Task Orders are out there for improvements to the UI, changes in policy and procedure, new initiatives the USDA has developed to improve participation, or basic improvements in the business processes.

For example, each program under MARS have varying calendars and they start throughout the year for all the programs. They start and stop at different times of the year. So there's always a renewal process to be evaluated every few months. There's always a year closeout process to be evaluated. During that the calendar year we have federal reporting and state reporting and as you know, the state and federal governments operate on different fiscal calendars so there's, year-end reports are for the feds and the state. So there's always that type of work.

Q. How big is the team, the existing team?

A. The team with the incumbent has varied from just 3 resources all the way up to 12 resources at one time.

Q. Recovered from the agency's side.

A. On our side?

Q. Yes.

A. The MSDE has a five member team for UAT and developing task orders. There are five great people that are dedicated to this task for over 7 years now. And so they've been building their work orders and task orders, talking to customers, talking to internals, and conducting surveys, so they have a whole library of work orders and they have grouping and prioritizing them internally. We we share them with the vendor and then they get on a calendar for work and they monitor a progress schedule.

Q. So like any developers from say your side or is it just --

A. No, there are no developers on this the MSDE side.

Q. Okay. And on the existing contractor, most of the work, I mean, the key resources have always been on site.

A. No.

Q. What's the ratio like, is it 60/40 or 70/30?

A. No, there's no on-site, there's no on-site.

Q. Okay.

A. The contractor does attend meetings here for clarification and whatnot. Because sometimes the WebEx just doesn't translate. Sometimes you have to see some of the business process you're replacing. So they usually send somebody out for to just view that process or whiteboard in a room with a group of people that debug something. Then they take it back to their team.

Q. How often does that happen? Is it once a month or more meetings.

A. As needed and lately that's probably been monthly in the last three months, but prior to that, we tried to do it with WebEx and stuff like that.

Q. Is it because of the space is a constraint?

MS. ZIEGLER: No, it's because of the complexity.

A. No, we don't, we really don't want to see the programmers. It would be more of a distraction.

MS. ZIEGLER: Right.

MR. PALCHER:

Also it would be hard to maintain scope, because the customer would be coming by and say they would like this and that and if would put the technical resource in a bad place. Not to mention that the project manager, I would worry about impacting schedule and cost.

Q. So you're okay with these team members working remotely and essentially from home?

A. Yeah, I don't care as long as the job gets done and you have some way to validate their reported time.

Q. Okay. And we will provide all the hardware and the laptops and everything?

A. Yes. Anything else outside of MSDE you would be responsible for purchase and licensing. We have a test environment here. We have virtual machines at MSDE. So we have test environments and we're about to go to multiple test environments.

Q. Thank you.

MS. RICHBURG: Are there any other questions on that?

Q. Well, you did tell us, but all work does have to be done in the United States?

MS. RICHBURG: Yes.

MR. PALCHER: Yes.

MS. RICHBURG: Ryan?

ATTENDEE:

Following up on your thing, you said the team could be four to 12 at times. So for example you have a small task. That you change and they put in some John Doe who does the work for 60 days. Now he's gone after that and then when you bring in more intense, they bring in someone ?? That is working now because they decide –

A. No.

Q. And all the strengths that are missing because this John Doe is gone. Someone has taken, is learning what your policy...and quality, and is it working fine?

A. As a vendor, there are ways to mitigate that risk and right now for us it's working fine. This also goes links with the experience of the contractor in the requirements requesting the TO contractor to be experienced in this type of On Demand O&M work.

Some people tackle it by bringing on multiple programmers per the task and they can share knowledge between them knowing that this person's also going to be working for another project for that contractor.

Then when we send them another task order, we bring that resource that is available, or the other one that was previously available.

Again you question build a reason for the requirements for the TO contractor to have experience in managing O&M staff and this type of contract.

Q. Well, you're not going to go less responsible that if John Doe is gone, and after three months, if you tell us that bring John only, we can bring somebody else?

A. No, we've never told a vendor to only bring a certain person. We only concern about their qualification and quality of work.

Q. Right. Thank you.

A. Of course.

MR. PALCHER:

That's why we have the key resources there, is the integration specialist we think would begin to understand their business model and the data base models.

So if you notice, the integration specialist kind of has to be able to work with programmers and stuff like that.

Q. Thank you.

MR. BLACKBURN: Next, any more questions?

ATTENDEE: No questions.

MR. BLACKBURN:

Anyone?

ATTENDEE: No questions.

MR. BLACKBURN:

Going once, going twice? All right, You've got to get the hand out.

Q. Do we need security clearances for any people working on this?

A. If it's stated in here.

MR. BLACKBURN:

No. I don't see it.

MR. PALCHER:

Yeah, that's the part that Dorothy assembled. I don't believe so. There are non-disclosure agreements that they'd have to sign. But there's no security clearance required. Again there are non-disclosure agreement to be signed.

MR. BLACKBURN:

Do you have a new question?

Q. Who developed this system? I know it's not the Canton Group, right?

A. Correct. It was developed by a local company in Maryland, MS Technologies in Rockville, Maryland.

MR. PALCHER:

Right. And they did develop the first phase and the second phase and they did as part of their original contract they had O&M support and then we did our solicitation and they didn't get it current O&M Contract. The Canton Group was awarded the existing contract.

Q. Why was the last contract only for a couple of years or less than --

A. We couldn't exceed the date of the life of the CATS II master contract. So that's the reason why it's ending May 30th.

MS. ZIEGLER: CATS+ was not up and running for us to use during the previous solicitation..

MR. PALCHER: Right.

MS. ZIEGLER: So we couldn't use it but we needed O&M.

MR. PALCHER: Yeah, because there's usually a four-month lead into preparing a Task Order for the CATS contract.

So by the time it came on board, it was just about two years or less left on CATS II.

Q. Right. But so far, so good. No challenges. Everything is going great?

MR. PALCHER:

There's been challenges and the vendors met them and I think several vendors could probably meet the challenges. Everybody has their own logistics to deal with issues. You know, we had a transition time of about 45 days with the previous vendor, so we included 30 days to overlap and transition to CATS+.

We've improved our documentation greatly and MSDE/OIT has a stronger understanding

of the server configurations supporting MARS. Did that answer your question?

ATTENDEE: Sure.

MR. BLACKBURN:

I think we're almost out of questions.

MS. RICHBURG:

Wow. Only 11 o'clock.

MR. PALCHER:

So Dorothy, the question while you went out of the room, they want to know if there was any security clearance involved in this and as far as I know, there's only a non-disclosure agreement involved.

MS. RICHBURG: That's correct. That's all there is. Okay. So going once, going twice.

(General conversation)

MS. RICHBURG: Yes, sir?

Q. 2200 hours.

MS. RICHBURG: Yes, sir.

Q. Typically you see 1980, 2000 or 2080.

MS. RICHBURG: 2080 yes. Because this not a fixed deliverable, we added time for additional resources and in case the work week exceeds 40 hours.

MALE VOICE: Okay.

MS. RICHBURG: Sometimes you may have a little.

MALE VOICE: Because there's a lot of costs will go up.

MR. PALCHER: That's fine. And those hours are for evaluation purposes.

Q. ... so basically the evaluation is consistent.

MS. RICHBURG: Yes.

Q. With the base line.

MS. RICHBURG: Yes. Uh-huh. And you won't exceed these hours. It shouldn't exceed them, but there may be less.

MR. PALCHER: The total value of the contract will never be exceeded.

MS. RICHBURG:

Any other questions? Okay. Well I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for coming. It was nice to see you all.

See some of the new faces, some old friends I haven't seen for a while. So be safe going back to your destination. Have a great weekend because some snow is coming.

Okay. So thank you very much and have a good day and a great weekend.

GROUP:

Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m. the proceedings were adjourned.)

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MARS MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT

TORFP #R00B4400006

Friday, February 7, 2014

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