



**Questions and Answer Set #4
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Local Telecommunications Services
RFP# 060B3490013
November 12, 2013**

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The Department of Information Technology received the following questions by e-mail for the above referenced RFP. These are answered below for all Offerors:

61. Section 2.6.4.1 (B)

We will not be able to compel technicians to surrender drivers license(s). Would the State please amend this requirement to remove the surrendering of a driver's license?

Answer: No. Offerors should indicate in their Technical Response that they can/cannot meet that requirement.

62. Section 2.11 Staffing Requirements.

Would the State consider including the flexibility to manage the staffing requirements by allowing additional or reduced staff commensurate with the level of services provided during the performance period of the resultant contract?

Answer: For FA 1 - No. There are currently over 4,000 accounts in the FA 1 section of this RFP and a dedicated account team is needed. For FA 2 – Yes. The staffing requirements will be adjusted as required.

63. Section 2.15.3 (second bullet)

We will be unable to alter our billing system, which currently bills actual usage with an offset, or credit, to provide a discounted usage rate. Will the State please amend this requirement to remove the second bullet point?

Answer: No. Offerors should indicate in their Technical Response that they can/cannot meet that requirement.

64. Section 2.7.2.2 (a)

We are currently able to provide service order tracking for a subset of services in our online portal. We continue to enhance and upgrade portal capabilities and continue to improve client's view of their orders. Could the State please amend this requirement to providing service order status for services that are currently available on the contractor's service order report?

Answer: No. Offerors should indicate in the Technical Response either that they cannot meet all of the requirements, or list those services where they do meet the requirements.

65. Section 2.7.2.2 (b)

For the services that are available in our service order reporting module, standard reporting elements can fulfill items a, b, c, & e. However, item d is not part of the reporting module.

Could the State please remove item d from this requirement?

Answer: No. Offerors should indicate in the Technical Response either that they cannot meet all of the requirements, or list those services where they do meet the requirements.

66. Follow Up to Question #19 from State's Q & A Set #2:

If the State's current inventory includes accounts containing a mix services that WILL be covered under the resulting contract, and services that WILL NOT be covered under the resulting contract, can Agencies continue outside the resultant contract to utilize and pay for services that are not covered under the resultant contract? If so, will the State require that such services are billed separately from services that are provided as a part of the resultant contract?

Answer: No. Only services that are identified on this Contract can be billed on this Contract. All telecommunications services must be purchased from a MD State contract.

67. Follow Up to Question #6 from the State's Q & A Set #2, and Amendment #4 Item #14 (Exhibit A).

We are submitting Exhibit A for Functional Area 1. We have included Staffing options as a part of Exhibit A. We believe the flexibility to increase or reduce the level of staff commensurate with the level of services purchased over the performance period of the contract is in the best interest of the State, and will provide the most effective and cost efficient levels of support to meet contract requirements.

Answer: As stated in the RFP, the State wants a dedicated account team. Offerors are to provide this account team at no additional cost to the State.

68. Follow Up to Question #6 from the State's Q & A Set #2, and Amendment #4 Item #14 (Exhibit A).

We are submitting Exhibit A for Functional Area 2, and would like to also submit the following brief, high level Service Descriptions for the significant components of a SIP solution. Please also note the separately attached Notional SIP Trunking Design diagram.

Access:

Access is the underlying transport to connect to the MPLS network. It is a layer 2 service Access can be either TDM (T-1, DS-3 OC-3 etc) or Ethernet (1 through 1000Mb). Access is the physical network interface in the customer's facility.

MPLS / Private IP – Port:

The MPLS port is the layer 3 / IP interface that resides on top of the Layer 2 access. MPLS provide the IP connectivity into our IP voice platforms such as SIP, UCCaaS/IP Centrex etc.

EF- CAR – Gold CAR:

Express Forwarding – Committed Access Rate (Also referred to as Gold CAR) is the bandwidth reserved within the MPLS network to support real time applications such as voice. The EF – CAR is an element of the Quality of Service functionality of the MPLS network. It allows for the segregation and prioritization of discreet data flows within the MPLS network. E.G. – a real time application such as voice is prioritized and queued into the network before another data flow such as web browsing or email

Answer: The State does not understand this question. This procurement is for voice services.

69. Follow Up to Question #6 from the State's Q & A Set #2, and Amendment #4 Item #14 (Exhibit A).

We are submitting Exhibit A for Functional Area 2, to include product options for SIP Trunking Solutions.

However, we are not including product options for IP Centrex as that service has been grandfathered.

Our hosted IP solution is known as Unified Communications as a Service (UCCaaS). We have included a service description document for UCCaaS for your review. Is the State open to hosted IP voice solutions other than IP Centrex? If so, would the State consider amending the IP Centrex requirement to Unified Communications Services or Hosted IP Voice solutions, and would the State like us to provide corresponding product options?

Answer: See Amendment #7

70. Amendment #4, Revised Section 2.3.1.2, Functional Area 2 IP Voice Services, Item 3 - PIC and LPIC Change Charge.

PIC and LPIC Change Charges do not apply in the IP world. The change is done in the SIP Invite (header of each call). Would the State like to remove this requirement, or should we simply indicate “n/a” to these charges?
Answer: If a service requested is not applicable then the Offeror should indicate N/A in their Technical Response.

71. Price Proposal Form Revised Amendment 4

What is the State’s intention for handling services that Agencies currently have in place, but that the State excludes (by choice or omission) from the Price Proposal Form?

Answer: Those services will be covered under a different contract, are no longer required or will be added to the resultant contract via Amendment or Contract Modification.

72. RFP section 2.7.1 states;

“Any service not designated on the Financial Proposal shall not be provided to any Requesting/Billed Agency without a modification to the Contract.” Please confirm that this language is not meant to prohibit a Requesting/Billing Agency from procuring a Service through some other means (such as tariff) if it so desires but rather is only meant to mean that if a Requesting/Billing Agency requests a Service to be supplied pursuant to the Contract, and such Service is not on that Contract, there would need to be a modification to the Contract to add the Service on mutually agreeable rates, terms and conditions.

Answer: If the State determines a service is needed, either the needed service will be on the Contract or it will become part of the Contract via Contract Modification.

73. RFP section 2.7.1 states;

“Any service not designated on the Financial Proposal shall not be provided to any Requesting/Billed Agency without a modification to the Contract.” CCOMAR 21.05.07.06 (E)(1)(a) regarding small procurement regulation standards, Small Procurements of \$5,000 or less can be done orally with contract documentation as little as an invoice. In addition, where a Contractor is a telephone company under the jurisdiction of the Maryland Public Service and is obligated to provide all filed tariff services, is DoIT attempting to circumvent both the Agency’s authority under COMAR for Small Procurements and the Maryland PSCs jurisdictional authority requiring a telephone company to provide all requested tariff service?

Answer: The State is not requesting tariff service. The State is requesting competitive pricing for Local Telecommunications Service under the resulting Contract

74. General Question:

According to COMAR 21.05.03.05 (E)(1)(b) “Adequate price competition” means competition between two or more responsible offereors...” through “procurements by competitive sealed proposals.” Also note subsection (E)(6); if the intent was to provide expressly for most favored customer pricing for sole source procurements (i.e., as a means to ensure fair and reasonable pricing when using that method), then the inference is that such protection was deemed unnecessary when utilizing competitively bid methods. Therefore, will DoIT remove sections 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 regarding Most Favored Customer pricing? If not, please explain how DoIT can treat this RFP as both a competitively bid procurement and a sole source procurement?

Answer: The State desires Most Favored Customer pricing on many of its procurements, whether they be sole source or competitive.

75. General Question:

According to COMAR 21.07.01 a Most Favored Customer pricing clause is not a State of Maryland Mandatory Contract Provision and therefore will DoIT remove IFB sections 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 regarding Most Favored Customer pricing?

Answer: See answer to Question #74.

76. General Question:

Can DoIT provide a list of current and existing Maryland statewide contracts awarded as a result of competitively bid proposals where a Most Favored Customer clause was required?

Answer: No, not under this solicitation.

77. Section 2.8 Procedure for Adding a Service Offering, Tax or Surcharge.
Will the procedure be the same for removing a Service Offering, Tax or Surcharge?

Answer: No. Service Offerings and Tax or Surcharge that are no longer used by any State Agency need not be removed from the contract. Service offerings that are being phased out shall be grandfathered through the end of the Contract.

78. Section 2.4.3.3

We can partially meet this requirement, and will make every effort to answer in a timely fashion, but cannot commit to three days. Our current process to initiate an inquiry begins with the State issuing an inquiry ticket (INQ) within the our online portal. Would the State agree to having our Transition Project Manager work with the State's Contractor Manager to develop a mutually agreeable methodology for this requirement within the Project Management Plan?

Answer: The State's intent would be to submit this request to the order desk directly via email or telephone and not through the online portal. The State believes that three business days is ample time to validate if a phone number is on a State account. The State would be willing to develop a mutually agreeable methodology for larger blocks of numbers.

79. Follow Up to Question #21 on State's Q & A Set #2; RFP Section 2.4.5

We can provide a mechanism to perform an audit of services that appear on an invoice. However, the yet unknown results of a potential audit make it difficult to commit to the remaining requirements of this section. There may be chargeable functions required to complete an audit. For example, if an audit requires a site visit to tag and locate a line or circuit, the site visit may include a Time & Materials charge. Also, the completion of an audit within 30 days of request will be on a case by case basis, and dependent upon the complexity of the research. Thirdly, Identification of services not used within the last 90 days will be dependent upon the specific service involved, and how the State uses that particular service. For example, a line used for emergency call out purposes (like a elevator line) may show no apparent usage for a given period, yet be deemed as "in use" due to the necessity for that service to be available when needed.

We can agree that our Project Manager will work with the Contract Manager to establish an agreeable mechanism to perform audits. Can the State please amend the requirements of this section due to the unknown nature of potential audits?

Answer: No. For audits under Section 2.4.5, it is the State's intent to validate that the State is being billed properly. Also, see Answer to Question #53.

80. Section 2.5.2.3

We can partially meet this requirement. We can consolidate accounts as requested by the State for billing hierarchy account changes. Note charges could apply for service-affecting account changes. Can the State agree to the inclusion of account consolidation as part of the Transition Project Plan, and will the State accept account change order charges as a part of Exhibit A?

Answer: The State would agree to account consolidation being part of the Transition Project Plan. The expectation is that any transition plan costs would be included at no additional cost to the State.

81. General Question; Exhibit A & Price Proposal Forms

Currently, there are services being provisioned, billed, and paid for that are not included in this RFP Service Offerings nor on the Price Forms. Additionally, it would be nearly impossible to add every tariffed service offering to Exhibit A, to capture all the grandfathered services that the agencies are using, or to maintain Exhibit A or the Price Proposal forms for all tariff service offerings. How does the State plan to handle services purchased by the agencies that are not accounted for under the resultant contract?

Answer: The State does not expect to have every tariff service offerings included in the resultant contract. Having only those services that are actively being used included in the contract reduces the potential for billing errors and reduces future audit requirements.

If a service is not included in the resultant contract there are three options:

- A) the service has to be removed from all accounts under the resultant contract**
- B) the service is added to the resultant contract as identified in Amendment #4 Item #14.**
- C) the service is provided under a different contract, and needs to be transferred to an account(s) under that contract**

82. Section 2.13.3

We can partially meet this requirement. We can provide report information for services for which information is available in our system(s). Reporting is by Account, not by contract. Information is available on multiple reports within our online portal. Reporting is dependent on mutually agreeable set of accounts. Would the State agree to account for this requirement as part of a mutually agreeable Project Management Plan?

Answer: No. The State expects the dedicated account team shall provide this information.