



STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Washington's Consolidated Technology Services Agency
1500 Jefferson Street SE • Olympia, Washington 98504-1501

DATE: December 1, 2023
TO: All Potential Vendors
FROM: Michael Callahan, RFQQ Coordinator
SUBJECT: Amendment #1 to 24-RFQQ-002 – *User Experience Consulting Services*

Summary:

This document is prepared by the Washington State Consolidated Technology Services (CTS) and shall serve as the sole official reply to Vendor Questions submitted in response to RFP 24-RFQQ-002.

Questions and responses are numbered for ease of reference only and are in no particular order or priority. Questions and comments have generally been stated as they were received except that some questions have been modified to maintain vendor confidentiality or to reduce redundancies. The answers may only explain or clarify some aspects that are already addressed in the RFQQ. Some of the answers may also supplement or change what was previously stated in the RFQQ or in an appendix. It is important that Vendors review all questions and answers. Vendors are advised to obtain and thoroughly review the complete, formal RFQQ located at: <http://watech.wa.gov/procurement-announcements>. In the revised RFQQ deleted text appears ~~struck through in black font~~, while added text appears underlined in red font.

Vendor Questions and Official Answers

#	QUESTION	CTS RESPONSE
1	Our offices are based in San Diego, CA. Most of our staff and subcontractors are in California. Are we available to participate in this project if we are not based within the State of Washington? We understand that we must be registered with the Washington State department of revenue.	The majority of this work can be done remotely, however, some customers may require in-person attendance for certain necessary activities, so on occasion there will be a need for travel to Washington state.
2	How many subcontractors vs in-house employees would the state prefer. Is this up to the discretion of the agency participating?	There is no preference per se, rather this is up to the discretion of the customer agency.
3	The RFP requires for the staff to be in-house for part of the contract. Do you guys have an idea of the percentage foreseen of this being required throughout the year? Would flying in suffice this requirement? If not, we are happy to bring on board local staff located in Washington, if the percentage necessary to have the staff be in-house would be significant.	See answer to question #1.

4	Is this 24-RFQQ-002 a new request, or is this a recompetee?	The contract that will result from this RFQQ will replace the expiring contract for these services.
5	What are the reasons for opening this RFQQ at this time? For example, was this service performed internally before?	This service was historically performed in house, until 2019, when we lost in-house capability. The current contract is expiring, and it is necessary to reprocurse these services.
6	What is the reasoning behind a two-and-a-half-week open application period? The RFQQ opened on November 22, 2023, a day before a national U.S. holiday, resulting in a constrained two-week submission period. This timeline may pose challenges for small businesses to adequately prepare and submit timely proposals. Please share the thought process behind closing this request on December 9, 2023.	There is an extreme urgency because the current contract is expiring, and a new contract is required to continue provisioning these services to the agencies' customers.
7	Can you extend the closing date by a week (to December 16, 2023) so that more businesses can apply? This additional time will allow for thorough, accurate, and well-prepared submissions, contributing to more of a competitive landscape and a better pool of candidates to choose from.	CTS adjusted section 2 Schedule. Please see updated schedule posted below.
8	[Regarding 4.1 Onsite Availability] We would like to confirm if the on-site requirements are absolutely mandatory, or if your team would be willing to work with the successful vendor in a 100% remote capacity?	Please see the answer to question #1.
9	Are there any budgetary constraints or limitations on resources that should be considered in the proposal?	There are no budgetary limitations, proposed rates will be evaluated as part of the procurement. As for resources, the important factor is that you can meet the demand of the state, which is relatively large and growing each month. We have, on average, 20 mid-to-large scale projects in flight at the same time for these services, so being able to resource accordingly to meet customers' demanding timelines is vital.
10	Who are the key stakeholders from WA CTS who will be involved in the project, and what level of involvement is expected from them?	There is a Digital Experience Manager in CTS who acts as the Vendor Manager for this engagement. The Vendor Manager meets regularly with customers and the Vendor to ensure performance expectations are being met.
11	Can a portion of the work be outsourced to outside of the United States (Canada, India, or Singapore)?	No
12	What is the current technology stack or platform used for your digital products or services?	It varies tremendously. Many Washington state websites are built on Drupal, but many are built on other platforms – examples range from Wordpress to .NetNuke to .NET, etc. The engagements via this contract cover everything from SaaS and COTS solutions to custom apps to CMS' and others.
13	Can the CTS provide the experience required for each candidate?	The required number of years' experience for each skill level is identified in Appendix E – <i>Cost Model</i> .

14	Section 3.4.1 Response Contents: This section mentions that the Response must contain "... completed client references" – but a later section lists references as optional. By "completed" does CTS mean a completed Vendor Client Reference Form – OR – will a list of three client references within Volume 1 suffice since section 4.15.2 mentions a list and calls the references optional?	Vendor <u>must</u> submit Client Reference information per Section 4.15 <i>Client References</i> . However, CTS at its sole discretion may elect to check the references provided for the top scoring vendor(s) as part of the evaluation process.
15	Section 6.7 Cost Model: The RFQQ sets the same hourly rate cap for Entry, Junior, and Senior Experience Level staff as the previous solicitation in 2018. To ensure availability of qualified staff, would CTS please consider a reasonable increase to this cap considering the significant wage escalation that has occurred since 2018 and that this contract will be locking rates for 3 years moving forward? A typical 3% escalation from 2018 to today takes the \$150 an hourly rate to \$173.89 in 2023, this aligns with both inflation and the increasing costs to retain qualified personnel.	CTS adjusted Appendix E – <i>Cost Model</i> . Please see the revised RFQQ released with this amendment.
16	Section 6.7 Cost Model: The RFQQ sets the same hourly rate cap for Entry, Junior, and Senior Experience Level staff as the previous solicitation in 2018. Given that pricing is factored into the scoring model at 25%, would CTS consider removing hourly rate caps for all labor categories so that vendors can propose best value rates and pricing can be evaluated by the existing scoring model?	CTS adjusted Appendix E – <i>Cost Model</i> . Please see the revised RFQQ released with this amendment.

2. SCHEDULE

This RFQQ is being issued under the following Schedule. The Response deadlines are mandatory and non-negotiable. Failure to meet any of the required deadlines will result in disqualification from participation. All times are local Olympia time.

Acquisition Schedule	Dates
RFQQ Issued	November 22, 2023
Final Vendor Questions and Comments due	November 29, 2023 by 12:00pm (noon)
State's Final Written Answers issued	December 1, 2023
Vendor Responses due	December 8, 2023 by 12:00pm (noon) December 18, 2023 by 12:00pm (noon)
Initial Evaluation Period	December 8-15, 2023 <u>December 18-22, 2023</u>
Vendor Interviews (optional)	December 18-19, 2023 <u>December 27-28, 2023</u>
Final Evaluation Period	December 20-21, 2023 <u>December 28-29, 2023</u>
Announcement of ASV	December 22, 2023 <u>January 2, 2024</u>
Vendor Request for Optional Debriefing due	December 28, 2023 <u>January 3, 2024</u>
Optional Vendor Debriefings	December 29-30, 2023 <u>January 3-4, 2024</u>
Contract Executed	January 3, 2024 <u>January 10, 2024</u>

CTS reserves the right to revise the above schedule.