

RFP Questions and Clarifications Memorandum

To: Solicited Vendors for Request For Proposals Number 3550 for the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH)

From: David L. Litchliter

Date: July 31, 2009

Subject: Responses to Questions Submitted and Clarifications to Specifications

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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: On page 1 the RFP states “all copies of the proposal must be sealed in the package.” In point 7, the cost proposal is to be in a separately sealed. Can a separately sealed envelope be put in the same box as the technical proposal binders?

Response: **The Cost and Technical proposals can be contained within the same box as long as the Cost proposal is in a separate sealed envelope.**

Question 2: Can the state clarify the number of copies required of the response? Page 2 indicates 10 copies and Page 7 indicates 12 copies. It was stated in the pre-bid conference on 7/20/09 that 12 copies were required, however amendment 2 indicated that 9 copies are required. Can the state please clarify the number of copies required for the response?

Response: **Sorry for the confusion. The posted clarification (Amendment 2) stands, one original and 9 copies for a total of 10.**

Question 3: Is the state requesting the existing SPIRIT data model documentation? If so, can the Vendor submit this electronically with the other sample plans versus printing

the entire SPIRIT data model and providing this with the submission of the response?

Response: **The State is requesting the Data Model for the Vendor's proposed Food Management System (either a preliminary for a ground-up development effort or a customization of SPIRIT FMS or the final if a COTS system is proposed) and would prefer that it be submitted electronically rather than on paper. The State currently has existing SPIRIT system documentation and does not require the Vendor to resubmit it.**

Question 4: Does the Performance Bond need to be numbered? Do all the pages of the Annual Report need to be numbered? Do all the sample deliverables on the CD need to be numbered?

Response: **Proposals will not have points deducted if these items are not numbered. However, Vendors should make every effort to provide the State the easiest path for a clear interpretation of their proposal.**

Question 5: This section references section 16.22.4, however we could not locate this section within the RFP. Can the state clarify this reference?

Response: **This reference has been removed. Please see Item #13 in 'Amendment 1 - Clarifications to Specifications and Opening Date Extension (07/10/2009)' on the ITS website.**

Question 6: It is our understanding that WIC is exempt from the HIPAA requirement. Currently the SPIRIT system does not fully support HIPAA. Is it the state's expectation that SPIRIT be modified to support HIPAA?

Response: **MSDH is removing each referenced requirement for HIPAA compliance from RFP No. 3550 for the SPIRIT system implementation.**

Question 7: Would it be acceptable to the state to have the Project Manager work remotely and only be onsite during key phases of the project? Additionally, could the DBA Lead work remotely and be onsite during key phases of the project? Can the state please provide an explanation of the role/responsibility and expectation of the DBA Lead?

Response: **Except for Section V, Item 7, Mandatory Legal Provisions and the approved USDA /FNS requirement to implement a comprehensive clinical system composed of the transfer the SPIRIT State Agency Model system in the existing technical infrastructure integrated with a customized Food Management system, no items in the technical specifications of this RFP are**

considered MANDATORY. Vendors are specifically disallowed from taking exception to mandatory requirements and proposals that do not meet all mandatory requirements are subject to immediate disqualification, at the sole discretion of the State. Each other requirement contained within this RFP is subject to the Vendor's discretion as to whether or not to take exception. When taking exception or providing an alternative to the State's requirement, Vendor should take care to provide adequate justification as to how their proposed alternative would benefit the State.

Question 8: This section indicates that this should be responded to within Exhibit H; however, section 1.2 indicates that each section must be responded to as Acknowledged. Is it the state's expectation that each sub section of section 14 be acknowledged with a statement within this section or is it acceptable for the Vendor to provide a General statement that all sub sections within section 14 are acknowledged within Exhibit H?

Response: Vendors may provide a general statement that all sub sections within Section 14 are acknowledged within Exhibit H. Additionally, Vendors are encouraged to provide a sufficiently detailed response in Exhibit H so that the State may be able to verify that the Vendor understood and can meet the requirement.

Question 9: The state is requesting a data entry mechanism to capture historical data that currently exists on paper or cards only. Can the state provide an exact listing of the types of historical data needed to be captured? In addition, can the state provide the specific fields to be captured for each type of historical data?

Response: The Vendor should refer to MSDH's WIC Certification Form for a list of specific fields to be captured from paper forms for historical data. This document can be found on the ITS website, named WIC Certification Form.pdf.

Question 10: Can the state provide a list of all field length specifications?

Response: Please refer to the following documents on the ITS website for field length specifications for existing WIC data: MWITS_MWINS File.pdf, Clinic Master File.pdf, and Clinic Transaction File.pdf. Note that MSDH uses two Clinic files to capture Clinic data. The Clinic Master File is used to store data related to all WIC clients who have been certified eligible or ineligible for WIC. The Clinic Transaction File is a daily file, which is used to update the Clinic Master file, and also stores CDC Nutritional Surveillance data.

Question 11: The Functional Requirement mentions Distribution sites and Vendors (such as “Authorized Vendors”). Are the Distribution Sites for redemption considered the same as Vendor?

Response: **No, there are multiple Distribution Sites located throughout the state but only one authorized Food Vendor (Authorized Vendor) is awarded the bid to provide WIC food to these Distribution sites per bid period.**

Question 12: Does the state allow for partial redemptions of benefits (this requirement references a Voucher, so does this mean the participant must redeem all food items on the voucher?)

Response: **The State does allow for partial redemptions. For example, if site runs out of a particular item in the participant’s food package, the participant will be given what’s available and instructed to return later for an additional pickup.**

Question 13: Can the state provide the estimated number of concurrent users that would access the system?

Response: **MSDH estimates 240 concurrent users for the Clinic System (including the Independents Clinics), and 210 concurrent users for the Food Management System.**

Question 14: Section: General - Does the State of MS have a budget for this proposal? If so, how much is the budgeted cost?

Response: **The State has chosen not to disclose the budget or estimated costs for this project.**

Question 15: Page 2: Do we need to provide one original and 10 copies (page 2) or 12 copies (page 7)?

Response: **The posted clarification (Amendment 2) stands, one original and 9 copies for a total of 10.**

Question 16: Page 2: The response on CD, can it be in a pdf format?

Response: **The CD responses can be in a PDF format.**

Question 17: Page 10, section 13.1: The State's contact person for RFP is Donna Hamilton or Rita Rutland?

Response: **Refer to the posted clarification, Amendment 2, Item 12; Rita Rutland is the State's contact person.**

Question 18: Section III, page 13, item 13: Will the State interview all resources provided by our company, and if so, will we be required to provide our staff onsite for interviews before contract is executed?

Response: **The State reserves the right to interview any/all staff identified as Key Personnel (Section VII, Item 10.2.7). Refer to Section VII, Item 28.10.2, in extenuating circumstances, the State may consider a telephone interview in lieu of an onsite interview.**

Question 19: Section IV, page 16, item 7.2: Can we get an exception for the SPIRIT system since we have not developed it?

Response: **No, except for Section V, Item 7, Mandatory Legal Provisions and the approved USDA/FNS requirement to implement a comprehensive clinical system composed of the transfer the SPIRIT State Agency Model system in the technical infrastructure integrated with a customized Food Management system, no items in the technical specifications of this RFP are considered MANDATORY. Vendors are specifically disallowed from taking exception to mandatory requirements, and proposals that do not meet all mandatory requirements are subject to immediate disqualification, at the sole discretion of the State. Each other requirement contained within this RFP is subject to the Vendor's discretion as to whether or not to take exception.**

Question 20: Section VII, page 36: If we uncover bugs in the SPIRIT system and make changes, will these have to be provided to USDA/FNS?

Response: **Source code with corrected bugs must be provided to USDA/FNS if there are charges associated with the correction of the defect. Since USDA/FNS paid for the initial development and ongoing customization, they own the SPIRIT source code.**

Question 21: Section VII, page 37: What are the interface requirements of WIC SPIRIT, PIMS, SAAS and MIDDS as concerning data elements and data types?

Response: **Refer to Section VII, Item 14.4 and to Exhibit G. It will be the responsibility of the WIC Implementation Contractor to work with State and other contracted Vendor staff to define a Standard WIC interface to each of these systems.**

Question 22: Section VII, page 37: Can we get documentation (requirements, system function, fields, attributes etc.) for current WIC, MWITS, MWINS, PIMS and SAAS?

Response: At the present time, the State can only provide file layouts for the existing WIC systems. Please refer to the following documents on the ITS website: MWITS_MWINS File.pdf, Clinic Master File.pdf, and Clinic Transaction File.pdf. Data and file formats can be provided during the design phase for PIMS and SAAS. The output from PIMS will be an HL7 record interfaced to WIC using Rhapsody. Data elements can include but are not limited to patient first name, last name, suffix, sex, race, ethnicity, SSN, address, city, state, zip code, birth date, home phone, work phone, language indicator, marital status, appointment date, appointment time, appointment status, appointment type, missed code, reschedule indicator, change appointment code, and reminder code.

Question 23: Section VII, page 43: What are the interface requirements for 13 independent providers of WIC certification services?

Response: It will be the responsibility of the WIC Implementation Contractor to work with State staff to define one standard WIC interface for the Independent Provider systems.

Question 24: Section VII, page 44, item 7.7: Since the functional specs are not exhaustive, can we propose a requirements phase under a separate contract?

Response: No, that is not a solution the State would consider. However, Vendors can choose to offer a separate line item under this contract for a specific number of hours that can be utilized for requirements definition. This line item could be utilized as a change order on an as needed basis.

Question 25: Section VII, page 46, item 7.19: Does the State use a pre-defined set of testing tools for QA purposes?

Response: The State has not identified a specific set of testing tools for this project. We intend to rely on the Vendor to assist us with this recommendation.

Question 26: General: How would changes in requirements and scope (currently not comprehensively defined) be approached and who would make the final determination if changes are or are not explicitly or implicitly included in the RFP?

Response: Changes in requirements and scope for this project will be handled just like any other project...via a change order mechanism. However, for this project, any proposed change order with an associated cost must be approved by USDA/FNS prior to approval by the State. The State Project Director will work with the project Steering Committee to determine whether the RFP contains the specifications in question.

Question 27: Page 47: Who is the WIC help desk used by? Should the WIC Help Desk Manual be provided even before the recommendation of the vendor regarding software and structure is implemented?

Response: The WIC Help Desk is used by MSDH staff that performs WIC duties. The State will rely on the recommendation of the Implementation Contractor regarding the schedule of events for the establishment of the WIC Help Desk.

Question 28: Page 48: Has the State built any Inventory Management system that we can re-use (MS Department of Education!!)?

Response: Vendors are encouraged to propose any Inventory Management system that they are aware of that will most efficiently and effectively meet the requirements of MSDH/WIC as defined in the RFP.

Question 29: page 50: This is regarding the 5 years life cycle cost, if changes are made to SPIRIT system (by USDA), will we be required to implement those changes for the State – under the five year maintenance cost? Also, what about the cost for enhancements associated with new requirements and/or new technology (such as upgrades), should that be included in the cost discussed above??

Response: Yes, the State will require that the maintenance and support phase of the contract include upgrades/enhancements to the SPIRIT SAM system during the contractual support period. Vendors should include all known and potential costs when proposing support period pricing.

Question 30: Page 105: Regarding response time requirements, since the application will reside within the State's infrastructure how do we guarantee response time? Will we be required to put monitors in place that show how/where/why the application is responding? In other words, would we be required to differentiate between response time delays caused by hardware and infrastructure vs. delays caused by software? Who is responsible for addressing delays caused by hardware/infrastructure?

Response: The Implementation Contractor will be required to work with State staff including MSDH and ITS staff to identify areas of poor performance. Vendor will be required to identify and substantiate any hardware infrastructure deficiencies that negatively affect system performance for correction by State staff. The State has hardware and infrastructure software monitoring capability available and can consult with the Vendor regarding how to pinpoint and correct deficient areas.

Question 31: Page 105: Also regarding response time, can we get approximate number of records (for each table) in the current WIC system – for performance measuring purposes??

Response: Record counts can be found in each of the WIC File Layouts found on the ITS website.

Question 32: Page 206: Since the State will run the hardware infrastructure, can we only provide security plan related to confidentiality and integrity (and not on availability and the physical security)?

Response: Please refer to Section 3.2 Physical Security of APD Resources on page 208 of RFP #3550. The Vendor is required submit a comprehensive security plan encompassing availability and the physical security since some of the physical hardware (e.g. computers, printers, scanners, etc.) will reside at the Clinics and Food Centers.

Question 33: Can the Department of Health provide a listing of the reports that are defective and currently not working for the purpose of scoping the effort?

Response: CSC and the State of Missouri are working together to identify these reports. The SPIRIT Vendor (CSC) is responsible for correcting these report defects at no additional charge to USDA/FNS. Therefore, the code that will be available for use by the awarded Implementation Contractor should be defect free. As code releases containing defect corrections become available, the IC Vendor will be expected to incorporate them into Mississippi's WIC system code. Vendor should understand that the State will not pay for a change order to correct defects in the SPIRIT code.

Question 34: Will ITS/Health provide a listing of the preferred hardware, operating system and database management system since ITS support a wide variety of technologies?

Response: Vendors are responsible for looking at the existing technical infrastructure of existing SPIRIT implementations and proposing the most efficient and

expedient combination of hardware, OS and DBMS infrastructure options available in the State Data Center. The RFP clearly states that no additional costs can be incurred for the technical infrastructure, so the State is relying on the Vendor to propose the best solution available utilizing any combination of database, servers, hardware and software available within the State Data Center.

Question 35: On page 105 for Section 20 - Data Conversion
Will the agency provide table structures for the current application for the purpose of mapping and data conversion scoping?

Response: Please refer to the following documents on the ITS website for table structures for the existing WIC applications: 'MWITS_MWINS File.pdf', 'Clinic Master File.pdf', and 'Clinic Transaction File.pdf'. Note that MSDH uses two Clinic files to capture Clinic data. The Clinic Master File is used to store data related to "all" WIC clients who have been certified eligible or ineligible for WIC. The Clinic Transaction File is a daily file, which is used to update the Clinic Master file, and also stores CDC Nutritional Surveillance data.

Question 36: Since the questions we submitted on July 9, 2009 have not been answered, **did you receive them prior to the July 9, 2009 deadline and will they be answered with others on July 30th, 2009?**

Response: They were received. All questions submitted from all vendors who attended both Vendor Conferences are consolidated and responded to in this document.

Question 37: Section VII paragraph 28.4 c states an evaluation criterion as "Current deployments of the proposed product". Since RFP 3550 mandates a single WIC MS solution consisting of minor modifications to the SPIRIT system (MSDITS Memorandum Preliminary Information for Vendors, RFP 3550 Section VII p.36, and Exhibit E), vendors must submit the modified SPIRIT solution to meet Mississippi's WIC Clinical Requirements or face rejection for non-compliance with the RFP. **How will the MSDITS/MSDH evaluation team ensure a level playing field for vendors who submit proposals but who did not develop the existing SPIRIT system and therefore have no current deployment instances of it to submit?**

Response: The evaluation item you are referencing is referring to current deployments of the proposed Food Inventory/Management system, not current deployments of the SPIRIT system.

Question 38: Section VII paragraph 7.17 page 45 requires the vendor's PM and DBA Lead to be on-site for the duration and that all development work is expected to be done in

the MSDH environment. Paragraph 7.18 page 46 says the MSDH will provide room for up to ten Vendor Staff. Yet paragraph 10.2.9, page 59 says the Vendor must commit key personnel and specify the percentage of time each will commit to the project which indicates the acceptability of some of the Vendor's Team not being on-site all the time. Finally, paragraph 10.2.12 indicates key personnel must work on-site but only during the phases they are responsible for. We interpret these paragraphs to mean it is mandatory that the Vendor's PM and DBA Lead be on-site 24/7 for the duration but all other Vendor personnel are required to be on-site only on an as-needed basis. We also interpret these paragraphs to mean the Vendor may do development work off-site as long as he can assure any member of the Vendor's team can be on-site, given sufficient notice, when required by the PMT Project Director or Project Manager. **Are these correct interpretations?**

Response: You have interpreted correctly. Vendor should note that except for Section V, Item 7, Mandatory Legal Provisions and the approved USDA /FNS requirement to implement a comprehensive clinical system composed of the transfer the SPIRIT State Agency Model system in the technical infrastructure integrated with a customized Food Management system, no items in the technical specifications of this RFP are considered **MANDATORY**. Vendors are specifically disallowed from taking exception to mandatory requirements, and proposals that do not meet all mandatory requirements are subject to immediate disqualification, at the sole discretion of the State. Each other requirement contained within this RFP is subject to the Vendor's discretion as to whether or not to take exception.

Question 39: You said the reason for having a 2nd Mandatory Vendors Conference was to ensure all vendors were treated equally, give vendors an opportunity to "shine" by being chosen to customize and transfer the SPIRIT system to meet MS WIC requirements, and to expand the number of vendors having an opportunity to "shine". **Considering the Section VII 28.4 c evaluation criterion and the fact the developer of SPIRIT source code has accrued over four years of experience customizing and deploying it but the other vendors have not seen the source code and will have far less time to become familiar with it in order to prepare a quality proposal that meets your requirements, how will the MSDITS MSDH evaluation team ensure all vendors are treated equally and scored fairly?**

Response: Refer to the State's response to Question 37. Mississippi's requirement to integrate a customized Food Management System with SPIRIT provides the opportunity for any Vendor to differentiate this project from the customary drop-ship implementations. This specification affords all Vendors an equal opportunity to propose their best solution. The State contends that the transfer and implementation of the SPIRIT system itself should not be very different from any other COTS-type implementation, thereby allowing most any system integrator an opportunity to propose. The State acknowledges that while the original software developer may be more proficient at code

revision because they wrote the code, we suggest that they may also be less responsive to finding new and creative ways to meet Mississippi's requirements.

Question 40: Checklist (3), Section I & Section IV paragraph 36; Proposal Bond. The checklist refers to Section I to determine if a Proposal Bond is required, Section I refers to Section IV para 36, the second sub-paragraph of which is somewhat ambiguous regarding whether a Proposal Bond is or is not required for this RFP. **Is a Proposal Bond required for this RFP?**

Response: **A proposal bond will not be required for this project.**

Question 41: Section IV paragraph 37 requires the price of a Performance Bond/Irrevocable Bank Letter of Credit be shown as a separate item on the Cost Information Submission. Section VIII provides a section of cost labeled "Other" which would seem to be the place where the price of the Bond should be shown. **Does the requirement to submit a Performance Bond price in Section VIII as part of the Vendor's Proposal indicate the State's willingness to pay for such a bond if they determine one is required upon contract award?**

Response: **The State requires that the Performance Bond be identified as a line item in case the State decides that the project risk is not significant enough to warrant the cost of securing the bond, then that cost can be eliminated from the overall project cost.**

Question 42: Section IV paragraph 37. Regarding the Performance Bond we note USDA/FNS (Exhibit G p.242) recommended if required that it be a % of the total work to be performed (such as 10%) so as not to be burdensome vendors bidding and run the risk of frustrating competition. We also note Section VII paragraphs 9.15.1 through and 9.15.4 the State's right to retain 25% of the value of a payable amount until completion of the project. The retainage provisions would appear adequate to protect the State's risk without a Performance Bond. **Does the State plan to require a Performance Bond and if so, what percent of the project cost will it require?**

Response: **The State will require a Performance Bond. The total amount of the Performance Bond should be equal to 10% of the total cost attributable to the SPIRIT implementation plus the entire cost of the Food Management System customization and implementation.**

Question 43: Paragraph 3 General Overview p.36. To obtain a copy of the SPIRIT source code vendors were required to attend the Mandatory Vendors Conference on June 29, 2009. We have not received a copy of the SPIRIT source code yet. **When will the**

SPIRIT source code be distributed to vendors who attended the Mandatory Vendor Conference?

Response: On Friday, July 31, 2009, the State mailed CDs of the existing SPIRIT code to all Vendors who had signed a Letter of Intent to Bid.

Question 44: Paragraph 3 General Overview p.36. The underlined text seems to imply the current Mississippi WIC system uses a proprietary SQL server which will require upgrade with the latest version of Microsoft Visual Basic in order to run SPIRIT. Paragraph 9.14.6 Section VII essentially restricts vendors to propose one of two proprietary servers at least one of which will require upgrade to its operating software and the software required to utilize it. **Are these exceptions to the current technical architecture the only approved customizations or is MDHS free to pursue alternate data base systems that are not proprietary such as MySQL or PostgreSQL without having to obtain prior approval from USDA?**

Response: Vendors are not required to propose a server at all. ITS will be hosting the SPIRIT databases on virtual servers in the State Data Center. In 9.14.6, Vendors are given the preferred database options of the State. Because this requirement is not identified as MANDATORY, Vendors can take exception to it. However, to do so is to incur additional costs unnecessarily in the way of licensing and training.

Question 45: Paragraph 3, General Overview p.36. Options for implementing the Food Management component are stated as 1) enhance the existing SPIRIT Food Management functionality, 2) a “ground up” development, and 3) a COTS solution (as is or customized). Section VIII’s cost options appear to include 1) and 3) but not 2). **Can you clarify which options are acceptable and reflected in Section VIII?**

Response: While all options are acceptable, the State assumed a ground up development would be cost prohibitive. However, the Vendor is welcome to modify the table in Section VIII to reflect whichever option Vendor chooses to propose.

Question 46: Paragraph 3, General Overview last paragraph, p.37 states proposals for meeting the MWITS replacement will be evaluated on the basis of their “overall closeness of fit” with Mississippi’s WIC requirements and that systems requiring the least amount of customization will be at a decided advantage. Exhibit B to Exhibit G indicates the State is well informed of the degree to which one vendor’s Food Management System fits their requirements and Exhibit VIII provides a line item for the license cost of such COTS software. **Based on the State’s prior knowledge of this vendor’s product and its “fit”, does the State have a**

preference for it *versus* a modified SPIRIT solution and if so, how will this preference be accommodated during the evaluation of proposals?

Response: The State is unsure to which Vendor Food Management System you are referring. The State has no knowledge of or preference for a specific FMS and will evaluate all packages equally against the requirements contained in the RFP. The FMS requirements were identified and documented based on current MWITS functionality including things that system does well and things that need to be included that are not currently addressed within MWITS.

Question 47: Paragraph 3, General Overview p.37. Systems that require WIC interfaces are listed as PIMS, SAAS, and MIDSS. Section VIII requires costs for interfaces for PIMS, WIC Independent Providers, and WIC Inventory Management. **Are separate costs for interfaces also required to be submitted in Section VIII for SAAS and MIDSS?**

Response: Yes, that is correct. Vendor should identify a separate line item cost for creating a standard interface to each of these systems.

Question 48: Paragraph 3, General Overview. Sixth paragraph (p.36) refers to customizations of SPIRIT and the same are referred to in other parts of the RFP as modifications to the SPIRIT. Since it is doubtful that SPIRIT code will meet MDHS's requirements "out of the box" its source code will need to be modified consistent with PMT and/or Steering Committee direction during the Period of Performance (PoP). **Since USDA/FNS retains ownership of SPIRIT source code, will their approval of these changes be required before roll-out and will they or the State provide continuing configuration control to preclude un-authorized changes and/or too many SPIRIT variants?**

Response: USDA has already provided approval to implement and rollout all modifications listed in the RFP. Customizations not currently contained in the approved RFP will have to be pre-approved by USDA/FNS prior to SPIRIT system modification. The Project Steering Committee identified in the RFP is the State's proposed mechanism to stem the flow of excessive requirements changes and change orders for the FMS portion of the system. Once activity begins under the IAPD to transfer SPIRIT, USDA requires that Mississippi participate in the SPIRIT Users Group. The SPIRIT Users Group will be the forum to provide continuing configuration control to preclude un-authorized changes and/or too many SPIRIT variants.

Question 49: Paragraph 9.4 This paragraph requires firm fixed costs to be proposed consistent with Cost Categories set forth in Section VIII but some categories listed in

paragraph 9.4, such as licensing, travel, subsistence expenses, etc., are not shown in Section VIII. Further, Exhibit A paragraph 5.2 states the Seller and Purchaser during project initiation (after IC selection) will develop a mutually agreed upon project plan which will include the division of responsibility between Purchaser's staff and Seller's staff and time frames and target dates for deliverables, e.g. the schedule. Exhibit A paragraph 5.2 also recognizes such a schedule may require revision from time to time over the Period of Performance (PoP). Given this, other types of contracts might be more appropriate for both the vendor and the state. **Would the State consider other forms of a contract such as cost reimbursement or task oriented contract based on quoted hourly rates?**

Response: No, this RFP is for a fixed price contract.

Question 50: Paragraph 9.16.6, 10.2.7, and 10.2.8. Paragraph 9.16.6 requires hourly labor rates for 11 specific job titles/descriptions which are not needed except for pricing out-of-scope Change Orders. Of these 11 job titles/descriptions, only 9 are reflected in Section VIII for costing purposes. Paragraph 10.2.7 sets forth minimum experience levels for 12 job descriptions which are not consistent with the 11 listed in Paragraph 9.16.6. Paragraph 10.2.8 requires Vendor to provide resumes of its "key" personnel in addition to that of its subcontractors. **Can you reconcile these paragraphs and provide a single set of personnel by job title/description for which hourly rates are needed and would such a list include "key" personnel or is that intended to be a separate list compiled by the vendor for which no hourly rates are required?**

Response: Vendor is expected to propose hourly rates for anyone identified as Key personnel. The State has suggested a list of roles that we consider to be Key Personnel. Based upon the Vendor's experience and expertise staffing projects of this size and complexity, at their discretion, the Vendor may choose to add additional roles as Key Personnel or may decide not to staff some of the Key Personnel roles for this project. However, if the State has identified a role as Key, and the Vendor staffs that role, he may not remove the role from being designated as Key. The Cost Information Submission table in Section VIII should be modified to reflect each role proposed by the Vendor regardless of whether it was identified by the State.

Question 51: Paragraph 10.2.5 and 10.2.7. All of the 12 job titles and descriptions shown are management level with minimum experience requirements ranging from 3 to 15 years. None require any academic credentials. Mississippi's Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) have highly skilled, capable, and innovative technical talent to support Mississippi's IT programs but graduating students and those obtaining advanced degrees have little to no job experience in the "real world". Such academic programs include skills and commensurate job titles of the type shown in question 13 below. **How flexible is the State regarding experience**

requirements and would the State permit vendors to include highly educated entry level personnel on its technical staff for this program?

Response: RFP No. 3550 provides the State's minimum requirements. Since the work experience of the Vendor is not a mandatory requirement, the Vendor may certainly take exception to experience requirements and propose alternatives. It is up to the Vendor to make a convincing case of the benefit to the State when alternatives to the specified requirements are provided.

Question 52: Related Question: Paragraphs 9.16.6 and 10.2.7. No mention is made of the need for Computer Scientists, Software Engineers, or Software Programmers to support IT architectural systems design, code customization, data conversion, test, implementation and to assist the MDHS's OHI group in developing applications and improvements should those be required initially or as the program gets underway. **Is it acceptable to the State for the vendor to utilize such individuals on his staff and/or as required for change orders which would necessitate the inclusion of hourly rates for those positions in Section VIII of the proposal?**

Response: The RFP documents the potential roles identified by the State that we believe are necessary for a successful system implementation. However, we are relying on the Vendor's experience and expertise in staffing implementation projects of this size and complexity. The Vendor is encouraged to propose any role that will benefit the project and the corresponding hourly rates.

Question 53: Paragraph 9.16.6 and Section VIII p.131. Post-Award, the vendor may desire to recommend additional Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) that would benefit both the State and the vendor which could help ensure a positive outcome. **Would it be beneficial to the State if vendors included hourly rates for certain SMEs identifiable in terms of their functional subject matter expertise?**

Response: The RFP documents the potential roles identified by the State that we believe are necessary for a successful system implementation. However, we are relying on the Vendor's experience and expertise in staffing implementation projects of this size and complexity. The Vendor is encouraged to propose any role that will benefit the project and the corresponding hourly rates.

Question 54: Section VIII p. 131. The direct hourly labor rates for Change Orders are for 9 job descriptions in Section VIII. They correspond only partially with the 11 listed in Section VII paragraph 9.16.6 and the 12 listed in Section VII paragraph 10.2.7. **Can you please reconcile these different job lists such that a single list includes all job descriptions for which the State needs hourly rates quoted in Section VIII?**

Response: The RFP documents the potential roles identified by the State that we believe are necessary for a successful system implementation. However, we are relying on the Vendor's experience and expertise in staffing implementation projects of this size and complexity. The Vendor is encouraged to propose any role that will benefit the project and the corresponding hourly rates.

Question 55: Section VIII p.131. The State requires hourly rates for specific job descriptions in this section for Change Orders. **What percent (%) of the overall work effort does the State anticipate it may purchase in Change Orders during the IC's Period of Performance (PoP)?**

Response: The State's goal is to purchase no change orders. We hope we have successfully defined this project fully and identified all possible requirements.

Question 56: Section VIII appears to require Firm Fixed Prices (FFP) for software services only and Section VII paragraph 7.33 verifies the state does not intend to purchase hardware as part of this procurement. The Exhibit A Standard Contract does not state explicitly what type it is but Article 3 implies the contract to be Firm Fixed Price (FFP) for services provided. Article 3 of Exhibit A refers to prices set forth in an attached Exhibit A. **Is the "attached Exhibit A" referred in RFP Exhibit A actually Section VIII of the RFP?**

Response: This RFP requires a Firm Fixed Price contract. When executed, the Standard Contract (attached to the RFP as Exhibit A) will have an attached Exhibit A. During contract negotiations, Exhibit A to the Standard Contract will be modified to reflect the high level project schedule, with deliverables and milestones denoted and a cost associated with them. The preliminary project work plan, as defined in Section VII, Item 11, should include the proposed project deliverables and milestones. To reduce the time required for project negotiations, the Vendor may provide draft Standard Contract Exhibit A, an initial project schedule summary including costs associated with milestones/deliverables to be included along with Section VIII as part of the sealed Cost proposal.

Question 57: Section VIII p. 129 first row asks the vendor to refer to an RFP item number and quote the cost to modify the base SPIRIT system to meet the specified requirement. Row four provides a place to quote the cost to modify the existing SPIRIT Inventory Management functionality to meet RFP requirements to serve as a MWITS replacement. **Do the "requirements" in row one include MWITS replacement or does row one only apply to modifying SPIRIT to meet WIC Clinical certification requirements?**

Response: Row one applies for each modification to SPIRIT (whether for MWITS replacement or just standard customization). The Cost Information Submission table in Section VIII is provided as a template to inform Vendors of the level of cost detail the State is expecting. The table can be modified as necessary to suit the Vendor's method of proposing detailed cost.

Question 58: See question 9 above. Article 3 of Exhibit A implies this is a Firm Fixed Price contract yet as stated in Section VII paragraph 7.7, functional requirements set forth may not be exhaustive hence Section VII paragraph 7.8 provides for the State and Vendor to work in conjunction with the MDHS staff to resolve ambiguities and inadvertent omissions. This plan is further stipulated in Section VII paragraph 10.2.12 which creates a Project Management Team (PMT) with the Integration Contractor (IC) to embark on discrete project phases the first two of which are a requirements analysis and data conversion and applications design. These activities are critical to ensure the State staff and IC share a common understanding of what these requirements are and, more importantly, agree on the best technical solution systems design to ensure efficient SPIRIT execution will meet MDHS expectations with minimal disruption to the existing State IT architecture. Given the State's investment in time and analysis of SPIRIT, such a collaborative requirements analysis and system design development process is critical to the project's success. However, it is unlikely the IC and the State Staff share sufficient commonality of detailed systems design knowledge prior to contract award and before a State Staff-IC PMT is convened. This forces vendors to make major assumptions about the systems design which may later be invalidated by the integrated PMT. To reduce this risk, a reimbursable contract type such as set forth in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Subpart 16.6, might be appropriate during the Period of Performance (PoP). **In view of this, would the State consider a cost reimbursement type of contract vehicle for the duration of the PoP or at least until successful completion of a Pilot Site?**

Response: No, this RFP is for a fixed price contract.

Question 59: Exhibit G p.232. **Has the IC for MIDSS been awarded and if so can you tell us who the vendor is and what his plans are for an interface to his systems design?**

Response: The MIDSS system is in contract negotiations. As of right now, the interface between MIDSS and WIC has not been fully defined. The State expects the IC Vendor to work with the MIDSS Vendor to build a standard interface between MIDSS and WIC.

Question 60: Exhibit G p.232. Independent Providers (IP). While we understand the WIC PM has directed IPs to access SPIRIT via the web, it would be helpful if we knew more about them and where they are located throughout the state. Exhibit C p.162 indicates the 13 IPs are non-public CMCs. **Does this acronym stand for Community Medical Clinics and are they privately owned?**

Response: **The acronym CMC should be CHC, and it stands for Community Health Center. All of the 13 Independent Providers are Community Health Centers, (CHCs), with the exception of the University Medical Center. Please refer to WIC Non Profit Local Agencies.doc on the ITS website for a list of all the CHCs and their addresses.**

Question 61: Exhibit G p. 243 item 5. USDA inquired about the schedule. **Is the Exhibit A to Exhibit G located at p. 246 of Exhibit G the currently envisioned schedule?**

Response: **That is correct.**

Question 62: Exhibit G p. 246. Section VII paragraph 9.15.4 states that amounts payable to the IC shall be derived from a project schedule mutually devised by all parties including the IC whose PM will be a member of the PMT (Section VII paragraph 11.4.1). This suggests the State intends for the PMT to re-visit the Schedule at Exhibit A to Exhibit G to avail themselves of the opportunity to revise the schedule based on obtaining a post-award consensus as to the functional requirements, technical specifications, and solution system design implementation which should be compatible with any revised schedule. Based on this, MDHS views the current schedule as set forth in Exhibit A to Exhibit G as a preliminary schedule that will be finalized after selection of an IC with the continuing flexibility to be adjusted throughout the duration of the PoP as may be necessary to conform to PMT or Steering Committee re-direction. **Is this a correct interpretation?**

Response: **Yes, your interpretation is correct with the following caveat: The State constructed the existing schedule based on best estimates available at the time of the APDU. For the proposal, the Vendor should disclose any proposed schedule modifications based on the currently known facts and document all assumptions, constraints and conditions.**

Question 63: Paragraph 10.2.12 of Section VII states the first phase of effort post-award is to engage the MDHS staff and as a MDHS-Vendor Project Management Team (PMT) and do a joint requirements analysis. These activities are critical to ensure the State staff and IC share a common understanding of what these requirements are and, more importantly, agree on the best technical solution systems design to ensure efficient SPIRIT execution with minimal disruption to the existing State IT

architecture. In Section VII paragraph 7.7 the State acknowledges functional requirements set forth may not be exhaustive precipitating the need to work with the IC as set forth in Section VII paragraph 7.8 to resolve ambiguities and omissions. Since the technical method of satisfying individual row elements of the Functional Requirements Traceability Functional Matrix will be heavily dependent on the outcome of a post-award PMT resolution of requirements impacting the best solution systems design, population of the Exhibit H Matrix prior to the IC selection will likely be somewhat general in nature. **Given proposal directions in Section VII paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7, and the elements of proposal evaluation in Section VII paragraph 7.22 and Section III paragraph 7, how important in terms of weight is Exhibit H in the State's proposal review relative to the other evaluation factors such as responsiveness, etc., and in the overall selection?**

Response: The scoring weights will be posted to the website on the day the proposals are due to the State. Functional requirements will play a large part of the evaluation. While the State did acknowledge the possibility that the functional requirements may not be exhaustive, we have done our very best to identify every requirement for both the SPIRIT and FMS systems, therefore we do not believe there will be large discrepancies identified during the Requirements / Gap analysis.

RFP responses are due August 14, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time).

If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Rita Rutland at 601-359-1022 or via email at rita.rutland@its.ms.gov.

cc: ITS Project File Number 37455