

## RFP Questions and Clarifications Memorandum

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**To:** Vendors Responding to RFP Number 3658 for Information Technology Services (ITS)  
**From:** David L. Litchliter  
**Date:** May 17, 2011  
**Subject:** Responses to Questions Submitted and Clarifications to Specifications  
**Contact Name:** Tina O'Neal  
**Contact Phone Number:** 601-432-8162  
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### RFP Number 3658 is hereby amended as follows:

1. **Section IX: *Technical Specifications*, item 4.12, UPS (page 78), is being modified to read:**  
  
4.12.2.2 Perimeter Cooling Units
2. **Section IX: *Technical Specifications*, item 4.14, Switches (page 79), is being modified to read:**  
  
4.14.1.2 Types of switches that may be included are 10/100, 100BaseT, Gigabit, 10GB, or Fiber. These switches may be chassis-based, standalone, or rack mounted using the port types just mentioned.
3. **Section IX: *Technical Specifications*, item 4.16, Thin Client Systems (page 81), is being modified to read:**  
  
4.16.1.2 One year parts and labor or exchange warranty.
4. **Section IX: *Technical Specifications*, item 3.2.4, Warranty-*Thin Clients* (page 66), is being modified to read:**  
  
3.2.4 *Thin Clients* must have a minimum 1 year parts and labor or exchange for the *Base Product* and all *Internal EPL Components*.

**5. Section XI: *Manufacturer Information Submission*, item 4. Categories of Products (page 88) is amended to add a new item as follows:**

The original Categories of Products was corrected on May 2, 2011 to include the category “Large Displays”

**6. Section XII: *Marketing Report*, item 1. Overview (page 90) is amended as follows:**

Vendors that participated in the last Micro EPL cycle under RFP 3605 and/or Computer Hardware EPL cycle under RFP 3630 MUST submit a current marketing report no later than July 15, 2011. The Vendor may supply a marketing report with combined or separate sales from Computer Hardware and Micro EPLs. If Vendor had no sales from either of these lists, then please state that there were no sales.

**7. Exhibits A - B: *Purchase Agreement*, item 1.1, Exhibit A – *EPL Purchase Agreement – non ARRA version* (page 96)**

The original link to the EPL Purchase Agreement without ARRA was incorrect. The link was corrected on April 23, 2011 with the following address:

<http://www.its.ms.gov/rfps/3658-contract-exhibit-A-without-ARRA.pdf>

**8. Exhibits A - B: *Purchase Agreement*, item 1.2, Exhibit B – *EPL Purchase Agreement – ARRA version* (page 96)**

The original link to the EPL Purchase Agreement with ARRA was incorrect. The link was corrected on April 23, 2011 with the following address:

<http://www.its.ms.gov/rfps/3658-contract-exhibit-B-with-ARRA.pdf>

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: In Section IX: *Technical Specifications*, item 4.12.2, UPS Exclusions (page 78) it reads:**

4.12.2.1 Large-scale or “enterprise” solutions that are intended for a server farm or enterprise-type environments.

4.12.2.2 Chillers

That is somewhat of a loose definition of some of our products and I was seeking some clarification. My question is, are we able to use the approved UPS solutions that are on our current approved list EPL products?

**Response:** ITS has not changed UPS category specifications that were in previous Computer Hardware EPL 3630. If the UPS solutions were valid on the previous EPL, they are valid now on IT Hardware EPL 3658. Yes, you may submit the same UPS products.

With that being said, ITS does acknowledge the specification is somewhat loose. It is our intent that the UPS is the basic product in the category and that “chillers” such as in-row cooling accessories are acceptable as opposed to perimeter cooling units that are technologies in themselves.

**Question 2:** I am a manufacturer sponsoring a reseller group but NOT selling directly. On the "ITS RFP Response Checklist", page two of RFP 3658, it states “*Manufacturers responding ONLY on behalf of a Reseller Group and not selling or receiving payments directly ONLY need to submit Items 1 and 9.*” But Item 1.c is “*Include the items listed in 2 through 12 inside the binder.*” This is confusing.

**Response:** Manufacturers sponsoring a reseller group and NOT selling directly ONLY need to submit a 3 ring binder, labeled as directed on the checklist, with their response to *Section XI, Manufacturer Information Submission* printed to a hard copy, signed, and inserted into the binder.

**Question 3:** I have an accessory type of device which contains wall-mount brackets, boom and projector. This device is meant to be used with an interactive whiteboard as an integrated bundle. Should this item be listed as an accessory to the whiteboard or in the projector category?

**Response:** If the projector is sold alone it should be listed in the Projector category. If it is not sold alone, it should be listed in the Interactive Devices (whiteboards, voting devices, displays) category.

**Question 4:** Are the Micro and Computer Hardware RFPs expiring July 2011? If so, will the IT Hardware RFP replace them? Are vendors required to respond to the new IT Hardware RFP if they want to continue to do business with Mississippi customers?

**Response:** Both the Micro and Computer Hardware EPLs are expiring June 30, 2011. Beginning July 1st, Vendors can no longer use either of these EPLs. All Vendors (manufacturers and resellers) must respond to the new IT Hardware RFP by May 24, 2011 at 3:00pm or at an update specified in RFP 3658 in order to continue selling through the EPL.

**Question 5:** Do we have to complete the RFP if the manufacturer is naming us in their group?

**Response:** Yes-both resellers and manufactures MUST respond to the RFP. The "ITS RFP Response Checklist", page two of RFP 3658, shows exactly what the manufacturer and the reseller are required to submit.

**Question 6:** I am a manufacturer. If a reseller had indicated they would like to be added as a reseller, do we indicate this on our submission, or must they request this separately?

**Response:** Both. In Section XI: *Manufacture Information Submission*, item 3, List of Approved Resellers (page 87), you will list all resellers for your group. The resellers will list the groups to which they belong in their response to Section VI: *RFP Questionnaire*, item 8, Reseller Groups: Questions for Sellers (page 30).

**Question 7:** Are the website requirements for the new IT Hardware RFP 3658 the same as the previous Computer Hardware and Micro RFPs?

**Response:** Listed below are the references to the parts of Section VIII: *EPL Process Specifications*, item 10, Mississippi Manufacturer EPL Website Requirements that changed from the previous RFPs 3605 and 3630.

Item 10.2 page 56

Item 10.8.8 page 58

Item 10.8.8.3 page 58

Item 10.9.4.4 page 59

Item 10.10.3 page 60

Item 10.12.3 page 61

Item 10.13.4.1

Item 10.13.4.3

Item 10.14.

**Question 8:** For a partner to be named to a specific IT Hardware Product Category, does the partner need to be able to sell all products within that category. Or, will ITS allow a partner to sell a subset of the product within a specific technology category?

**Response:** The reseller MUST be able to sell everything you propose in a single category. If you approve seller A for the video category, they must be able to sell ALL items you propose on the video price list.

Questions 9 through 34 were submitted by manufacturers sponsoring a Reseller Group and should be construed accordingly.

**Question 9:** **Would ITS want to see product and pricing in the submitted proposal? Or is it not required?**

**Response:** RFP 3658 does not require that ITS see the product and pricing in the originally submitted proposal. ITS will eventually get to see your product and pricing when you set up a test website for the EPL. That being said, you MAY send your price list with the original submission or send it by email at or after the proposal opening. Inclusion of your price list would expedite ITS' review.

**Question 10: Does ITS prefer a cover letter included with submission?**

**Response:** No, ITS does not request or prefer a "cover letter" with the vendor's submission. If there is some level of information that you need to share with ITS that is not covered in your proposal response, a cover letter would be appropriate.

**Question 11: Is ARRA funding still available to schools in Mississippi?**

**Response:** Yes, there still is unspent ARRA funding.

**Question 12: When submitting an agreement with ARRA funding, can schools that run out of funding or that have no funding still purchase via the ITS contract?**

**Response:** Yes, please reference RFP 3658, Exhibit B, *EPL Purchase Agreement, ARRA version, article 9.14.*  
It states that "... some, all or none of the purchases made under this EPL Agreement may be funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009..."

**Question 13: We are in the process of obtaining a Mississippi business license, should we submit documentation for proof with our submittal?**

**Response:** No, that is not required.

**Question 14: When a manufacturer submits a RFP and will be selling direct along with the value-added/mail-order resellers that are approved, is the vendor required to utilize one of those resellers if a customer orders direct and would like installation?**

**Response:** If a customer requires installation services for the products ordered from IT Hardware EPL 3658, the customer needs to order the products and services from the same approved EPL Seller -- i.e, they should not order the product from "Seller A" and the related services from "Seller B". The chosen seller must have also proposed the not-to-exceed hourly service rates in "*Section X, Cost Information for Sellers*" with these rates approved and published on the EPL by ITS. The seller could be classified as either "value-add" or "mail order" and could be a reseller or could be the manufacturer, as long as that seller had been approved to sell directly off the EPL.

**Question 15: We believe our services classify us as a Value-added vendor; however, we are not located within 200 miles of the Mississippi border. Could you clarify if we are able to utilize a virtual office, such as a home office, to meet this requirement?**

**Response:** No, a seller, regardless of whether a manufacturer or a reseller, may not use a virtual office in order to qualify for the "value-added" status.

**Question 16: Are there negative aspects to being categorized as a mail-order vendor?**

**Response:** The "Mail-order" designation connotes to the customer that the vendor does not have offices located proximate to Mississippi and may or may not offer installation services using the vendor's own personnel. A "Mail-order" vendor, whether the manufacturer selling directly or a reseller, may still quote and sell installation services as long as they propose fees in their response to Section X, *Cost Information for Sellers*. There really isn't a penalty per se for being designated "mail-order". The biggest negative is that ITS restricts the number of "mail-order" resellers for any manufacturer to five (5). Note that this was increased under RFP 3658 from three (3) maximum mail order resellers in our previous RFPs. Also note that if the Manufacturer decides to sell directly, it does NOT affect the maximum five (5) resellers, whether designated by ITS as mail-order or value-added.

**Question 17: On the ITS RFP Response Checklist, #1, item D states that ITS does not want a copy of the RFP returned. Would ITS prefer that responses to Section VIII be answered directly on the document or is the preference to be answered on separate paper?**

**Response:** Either response method is acceptable. The intent of the statement from Checklist #1 is that ITS does not need or want the entire RFP copy back -- just the responses to those sections requiring a response.

**Question 18: Section IV, #13, item 13.1 - When the term electronic invoicing is used, is ITS referring to EDI, email, excel spreadsheet?**

**Response:** ITS: Section IV, item 13 et seq, page 17, all refer to electronic payments and invoicing for state agencies using the Statewide Automated Accounting System or SAAS. Please follow the link from 13.1 for more information. ITS does not set these requirements. They are set by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration. <http://portal.paymode.com/ms/>.

**Question 19: Section IV, #13, item 13.2 - Could you clarify whether schools are considered state agencies?**

**Response:** ITS: K-12 schools, Institutions of Higher Learning, and Community Colleges are NOT considered "state agencies". Local government such as city and county

governments, are NOT considered "state agencies". For more information and a list of state agencies, visit the State's portal, <http://www.ms.gov> and choose "Mississippi Government" or go directly to this link: [http://www.ms.gov/state\\_agencies\\_alpha.jsp?Category\\_ID=16](http://www.ms.gov/state_agencies_alpha.jsp?Category_ID=16) .

**Question 20: Section VI, #8, item 8.2 - As a manufacturer who will sell directly as well, could you clarify this item?**

**Response:** Section VI, item 8.2, page 31, states "*Any Reseller Group member must submit a complete RFP binder response, as detailed in the RFP Response Checklist on page 2 of this RFP, and this response must be received by ITS by the proposal opening date and time stated in the RFP Project Schedule in Section VIII, item 3.*"

If a Manufacturer chooses to sell directly alongside their Reseller Group, the Manufacturer is required to submit all the items from the Check list on page 2. That Manufacturer's Resellers also submit everything from the Checklist on page 2, with the exception that resellers do not submit *Section XI, Manufacturer Information Submission*.

Please note that two of the items on this checklist may not be applicable: Section V, Proposal Exception Summary is not applicable if the responding vendor has no exceptions. Section XII, Marketing Reports, is applicable to all sellers but a new seller not previously on an ITS EPL will not have a sales report until the end of each year of the IT Hardware EPL contract.

**Question 21: Section VIII, #9, item 9.1.5 - Office locations that will serve Mississippi include a home office, will this qualify us as a value-added vendor?**

**Response:** If the home office is the only location within 200 miles of Mississippi, the vendor will not meet the value-added criteria. Item 9.1.5 requests that you describe the offices and locations that will be supporting the EPL contract, regardless of the location or whether "brick and mortar" or home or virtual offices.

**Question 22: Section VIII, #9, item 9.3.2.5 - Could ITS provide further clarification to this question? We are unsure of the information that is being asked as depending upon the circumstance, it could be answered different ways.**

**Response:** Section VIII, item 9.3.2.5, page 54, asks whether the same technicians are used for installation and later for maintenance. There is not a right or wrong answer. Please just explain your business model for how you plan to support Mississippi customers.

**Question 23: Section VIII, #9, item 9.6 - Is ITS looking for the training method for the schools or the training method used within the vendors facilities? For example, would a web tutorial be considered a training method?**

**Response:** Section VIII, item 9.6, page 55, asks the seller to describe training resources and facilities. There is not a right or wrong answer. Training might include on-site personnel brought to the Mississippi customer's site, vendor training facilities, or other resources such as online training.

**Question 24: Section VIII, #9, item 9.12 - When ITS states "on-site" personnel response, please clarify what is meant?**

**Response:** Section VIII, item 9.12, page 55 asks for information about how your company will support the customer with service calls. There is not a right or wrong answer. Some EPL categories have on-site warranty requirements. Some manufacturers offer on-site warranty or extended warranty over and above the parts and labor requirements for other EPL categories. If there is an on-site warranty requirement or your company offers on-site repair, please describe your policy for responding to the initial call and any on-site requirements. For more information on on-site warranty, please see Section IX, *Technical Specifications*, item 3.1.1.

**Question 25: Section XI, #1, items 1.3 & 1.4 - Does ITS want information on a sales contact or contract contact?**

**Response:** Section XI is the "Manufacturer Information Submission" and is NOT for your direct sales contacts. Section XI, items 1.3 and 1.4 ask for the contacts for managing the "Manufacturer Reseller Group". ITS uses those contacts to support and help manage the reseller group members, send notifications, etc. If you are selling directly, please put your sales contacts in the Vendor Contact Information Form (excel spreadsheet) that is described in Section X, *Cost Submission for Sellers*.

**Question 26: Section XI, #5, item 5.5 - Does ITS want to see a volume pricing breakdown? Could you clarify what is being asked when "method will be used to calculate the pricing" is stated if your company also plans to sell directly.**

**Response:** See ITS' response to question # 9 above. ITS will eventually need to see and approve the price list that will be made available to the customers on the Manufacturer EPL Website your company creates and maintains. Section XI, item 5.5, page 89 is asking you to explain the methodology of how you will determine the EPL discount cost. You certainly may include a copy of your price list showing the line item discounts with your answer to this question.

**Question 27: Will entities be able to purchase products utilizing a purchasing card?**

**Response:** ITS: Your question seems to be two-fold. First: Yes, some entities use a purchase card for some purchases. Each entity typically sets limits on when a purchasing card is used versus when a purchase order is used. The purchasing cards are often used for small dollar purchases. Second: Purchases cannot be

made directly from the website. Refer to Section VIII: *EPL Process Specifications*, Item 10.8.5. "The website must not have a true "shopping cart"...The website is a "quote tool" only."

**Question 28: Can you confirm that the live website does not need to be functional until July 1st? When should the test URL be submitted?**

**Response:** Yes, the website may not be available for customer use until July 1, 2011. The test URL should be submitted as soon as possible to provide time for the EPL Team to review and approve your website. If the website is not ready for the July 1 target date, there is no penalty except in the sense that until the website is live and approved; your customers will not be able to purchase the products using the EPL as their procurement tool.

**Question 29: Please confirm during the course of a contract that is MSRP minus based for the pricing that increases are allowed if an MSRP increases. It is understood pricing at the lower level would need to be honored for 30 days to ensure outstanding quotes/orders may be processed.**

**Response:** Confirmed. If the MSRP increases, the EPL price would increase but the percentage discount would remain constant. The Manufacturer would still need to honor the lower price for 30 days.

ITS understands that for Manufacturers with multiple categories of products, the percentage discount might vary. If this is the case, please just describe the discounts in response to Section XI: *Manufacturer Information Submission*, item 5, page 88. Example: Projector Category discount is XX% off MSRP; Large Display discount is YY% off MSRP.

**Question 30: If a manufacturer does not hold a GSA or WSCA contract, please advise what is to be used for price benchmarking?**

**Response:** If using MSRP Minus discount for pricing, an additional benchmark such as GSA or WSCA is not needed. MSRP Minus discount, GSA or WSCA are all acceptable benchmark examples.

Please note that the intent of Section XI: *Manufacturer Information Submission*, item 5 and sub-items 5.1 through 5.5, "Pricing" is for the Manufacturer to understand that the State is requiring the Manufacturer to publish a discounted EPL Price and for the Manufacturer to explain to ITS how the discount is being calculated. We have asked this question in several different ways. If your company uses an MSRP Minus discount, then the GSA or WSCA benchmarks might not be applicable, or vice versa.

**Question 31: On, Section VIII, page 62, item 10.13.4.1 it states the fee for an ITS hosted website is \$1000 for a six month period. As this contract is for 3 years please confirm the total fee that would be payable is \$6000.**

**Response:** Confirmed. The total fee that would be payable would be \$6000 for a Manufacturer that requests that ITS host their site for the entire 3 years. However, some Manufacturers may respond to RFP 3658 at an update period after the initial opening or may need ITS hosting for a shorter period. In this scenario, the total hosting fee would be less.

**Question 32: Section IX, item 1, page 64. Should a manufacturer not respond to one of the categories listed on page 64 at this time are they locked out for the 3 year period or would they be allowed to propose at the 6 month renewal intervals?**

**Response:** The Manufacturer may add another category after their original approval by notifying the EPL Team. The EPL Team would review the revised product list and provide feedback and approval. It would not be necessary for the Manufacturer to wait for one of the six month update periods.

**Question 33: Section IX, Technical Specifications. Please confirm Windows version of XP, 7 or Vista is a business edition and not home version.**

**Response:** Confirmed.

**Question 34: Section XI of the RFP, page 88 does not include category Large Displays in the list. Will this be added as this category is requested earlier in the RFP?**

**Response:** Thank you for spotting this omission. ITS made this correction on 5-2-2011 to RFP 3658, Section XI, item 4, "Categories of Products", page 88, by adding "Large Displays" to the list. ITS replaced both the Word and PDF versions of RFP 3658 on our website at <http://www.its.ms.gov/rfps/3658.shtml> . For vendors that downloaded the RFP before 5-2-2011, you may simply hand add "Large Displays" to the category list on page 88 if you sell that product.

**Question 35: Could you please clarify if Vendors are allowed to submit any exceptions on this RFP?**

**Response:** Section V: *Proposal Exceptions* outlines the process for taking exception. Section VI: *RFP Questionnaire*, item 6, pages 29-30, as well as Exhibits A-B: *Purchase Agreement*, page 96, excludes the vendor's ability to take exceptions to the *EPL Purchase Agreement*, either Exhibit A or Exhibit B. The Vendor may take exception to portions of RFP 3658 other than the *EPL Purchase Agreement*. That being said, please remember that the Express Products List is a multi-award and that, to be fair to all responders and for consistency for the EPL Customer, there is a need for uniformity among the EPL vendors and a level playing field.

**Question 36: We would like to inquire about adding the following Advance Security Solutions to our IT Hardware Product Categories so that these are available for sale on the state contract.**

**Response:** No, you may not add these products. ITS does not currently have "Security" Categories on this EPL. ITS does have a separate "Security Hardware and Software EPL 3612" that expires 1-31-2012. For more information, go to the ITS Security Division website at [http://www.its.ms.gov/services\\_security\\_procurement\\_contracts.shtml](http://www.its.ms.gov/services_security_procurement_contracts.shtml) .

RFP responses are due May 24, 2011, 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 Tina O'Neal at 601-432-8162 or via email at [tina.oneal@its.ms.gov](mailto:tina.oneal@its.ms.gov) .

cc: ITS Project File Number 39209