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**Q & A #1 to
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Travel Services for the State of Maryland
050B9800007
April 6, 2009**

This List of Questions and Answers #1 is being issued to clarify certain information contained in the above-named RFP. The statements and interpretations of contract requirements, which are stated in the following questions of potential offerors, are not binding on the State, unless the State expressly amends the RFP. Nothing in the State's responses to these questions is to be construed as agreement to or acceptance by the State of any statement or interpretation on the part of the vendor asking the question as to what the contract does or does not require.

1. **Question:** Form D requires statements of usage of MBE firms, how do we respond to that if we are the MBE firm submitting the RFP?

Answer: All Offerors that submit a proposal in response to the RFP are required to meet the MBE subcontracting requirement, even Offerors that are themselves MBEs. An Offeror who is also an MBE firm, must respond to Form D requirements the same as any other non-MBE firm. MBE firms who submit proposals in response to this solicitation cannot use themselves to meet the MBE requirement and must either subcontract to other MBEs or request and meet the waiver requirements. Failure to properly and timely complete and submit MBE forms will result in the rejection of the proposal. Deficiencies in MBE forms may not be cured after submission. See also responses to questions 14 and 46.

2. **Question** Assembling the RFP - 1.10 please clarify what bound means. A 3 ring binder, a spiral bound document or something presented in a folder?

Answer: Bound means any method that would hold each copy together and could include a 3 ring binder or a spiral bound document.

3. **Question:** If the company submitting the RFP is not based in Maryland, is it necessary to register with the Department of Assessments and Taxation prior to learning of the award?

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Answer: If the company submitting the RFP is not based in Maryland or is not registered to do business in Maryland, it will be necessary to register with SDAT prior to final award. An award cannot be made to a company that is not registered to do business in Maryland.

4. **Question:** I see in 3.9.3 that a credit card will be used, however in 1.29 mentions ETF payments. Please clarify.

Answer: RFP Section 1.29 is mandatory language for all solicitations. However, unless invoices are submitted to DBM and DBM must make a payment directly to the Contractor, it will have no impact on the contract resulting from this solicitation. Since all services are to be billed to one of the State's credit cards, the Contractor will not be submitting any invoices to DBM for any payments and thus no ETF will occur.

5. **Question:** Amtrak does not require an appointment/approval. All documents are issued through ARC.

Answer: You are correct. The RFP Section 2.2 will be revised to require a letter of good standing from Amtrak or a copy of your ARC Validation plate rather than the appointment certification. See Amendment #2.

6. **Question:** In Section 3.1.3 of RFP please clarify the volume of the RFP. This paragraph indicated that there are agencies that are not mandated to use the Contractor. We would like to know if the figures of 2.6 million represent the Executive Branch Agencies for travel only?

Answer: The \$2.6 million referred to in RFP Section 3.1.4 is for fiscal year 2008 and includes air and rail for all agencies listed in Attachment G. Attachment G includes the Executive Branch and Legislative Branch.

7. **Question:** RFP Section 3.3.1. How are travelers making request for travel with the current contract?

Answer: Travelers are making requests for travel with the current contractor through their respective agency travel coordinators. The agency coordinators contact Globetrotter by phone and give them the approved authorization number and then Globetrotter books the approved travel services. See 3.3.1 in the RFP.

8. **Question:** What types of fares are used (i.e., Government or least expensive)?

Answer: The reservation must be made in accordance with the State's Standard Travel Regulations (<http://dbm.maryland.gov/>, keyword search "travel") and Contractor's personnel must be familiar with the State's lowest logical fare policy (COMAR 23.02.01.03). See RFP sections 3.2.2, 3.3.1, and 3.4.

9. **Question:** Paper tickets cost at least \$100 per the air carrier and they must be sent by courier which is an added expense. Does this RFP take this into consideration?

Answer: The RFP does take this into consideration by allowing Offerors to provide an all inclusive price for each printed ticket the Contractor will provide to State travelers. While paper tickets may have additional associated costs, the contractor should consider this when establishing its price per paper ticket transaction fee.

10. **Question:** RFP Section 4.4.8 - Economic Benefit Factors - Please clarify what you are looking for from firms that are not located in the State of Maryland? Will firms operating in a different location be penalized in the bidding process because their workforce may be working from a central reservation center?

Answer: The State is looking for the Offeror to describe how the award of this contract to the Offeror, whether in or out-of-state, will benefit the Maryland economy. Economic Benefits has been identified as one of the technical criterion considered in evaluating and ranking proposals. The more economic benefit to the Maryland economy identified in the proposal, the more consideration in that criterion for the Offeror. Please note that the “Economic Benefits Factors” is the least important factor in considering an offer.

11. **Question:** Could you confirm that Volume II the Financial Proposal should only contain the price sheet?

Answer: Confirmed that Volume II, the Financial Proposal should only contain Attachment F – Price Proposal Form.

12. **Question:** How much of your travel spend is for international air?

Answer: During the past fiscal year about 19% of the State’s travel spend was for international air. However, this is merely historical information and may not reflect future activity.

13. **Question:** How many international transactions annually?

Answer: During the past fiscal year, there were about 200 international transactions. However, this is merely historical information and may not reflect future activity.

14. **Question:** We are a woman owned business. Do we need to submit an MBE subcontract plan?

Answer: All Offerors, including MBE Offerors, must submit an MBE subcontract plan that will include the firm’s commitment to spend 5% of the fees collected with one or more MDOT certified MBEs (not the MBE Offeror) or request and qualify for a waiver. Also, see response to questions #1 and 46.

15. **Question:** In Section 4 .2, a request for 4 bound copies of each volume, Technical and Financial Proposals is outlined but in 4.5 only 3 bound copies of the Financial Proposal are requested. Please clarify.

Answer: Four (4) bound copies of the Financial Proposals shall be submitted by each Offeror. Section 4.5 will be corrected via Amendment #2. See Amendment #2, section 8.

16. **Question:** In Section 3.4.13, Special and Group Travel services are mentioned. Please indicate the amount of group business you anticipate and define in more detail the scope of work that would be required.

Answer: The State cannot anticipate or define in more detail special and group travel. However, during the last fiscal year, there were 18 group travel events and 0 special travel service activities. However, this is merely historical information and may not reflect future activity. Most of the State's group travel will be associated with Morgan State University and its athletic department. The sports teams (football, basketball) will be the biggest users of group travel services. It should be noted that the Travel vendor is able to charge the per ticket fee for each airline ticket issued related to the group travel. The ticking process is no different than a non -group purchase.

17. **Question:** Are we correct in understanding that a transition plan, referred to in 3.6, would be submitted after this contract is awarded?

Answer: You are not correct in understanding about the transition plan. RFP section 4.4.5 requires each Offeror to prepare a response to each major section which would include RFP 3.6. To provide that clarity, the RFP is being revised by adding a new section 4.4.14 that will require a draft transition plan. Further, only the successful Offeror will be required to submit a finalize transition plan within 10 days of the notice to proceed. See Amendment #2, section 9 for details.

18. **Question:** Will you accept hand delivery of Proposal Submissions?

Answer: Hand delivery of a proposal to the Procurement Officer is acceptable. The proposal submission may not be delivered by e-mail or facsimile. See RFP section 1.10.

19. **Question:** Are there any security concerns that would require extra time if hand delivery is acceptable?

Answer: There are security concerns that may require extra time if hand delivery of proposal is chosen. All visitors to the Department must register and provide proper identification (i.e. driver's license or similar type ID) at the entrance to 45 Calvert Street in Annapolis.

20. **Question:** Do you have any service issues with your current travel management provider? Please outline those issues.

Answer: The Department's policy is not to discuss on-going contractual relationships or comment on the performance of contractors.

21. **Question:** What is your reason for going out to bid at this time?

Answer: The reason the Department is going out to bid at this time is that our current contract expires June 30, 2009. Since there are no further options under the current contract, the Department is required to conduct a new procurement for these services.

22. **Question:** Which are your top 3 carriers?

Answer: During the past fiscal year, the top three carriers were Southwest 46%, Delta 11%, and British Air 11%. However, this is merely historical information and may not reflect future activity.

23. **Question:** What are your 3 top city pairs?

Answer: During the past fiscal year, the top three city pairs were Baltimore/Atlanta (4.5%), Baltimore/Orlando (3.98%) and Baltimore/Denver (3.25%). These are percentages of all State travel. However, this is merely historical information and may not reflect future activity.

24. **Question:** Is use of the awarded travel agency mandated?

Answer: The use of the travel agency is required, unless there is a case of an emergency.

25. **Question:** When does the current contract expire?

Answer: The current contract expires June 30, 2009.

26. **Question:** Does the State have agents on-site or is a call center utilized? What is the current service configuration?

Answer: The State's current vendor utilizes a call center. There is no requirement for onsite service.

27. **Question:** What is the State's and its travelers/users' satisfaction with current agency on scale of 1 – 10? 1 being completely dissatisfied, 10 meaning 100% satisfied.

Answer: The Department's policy is not to discuss on-going contractual relationships or comment on the performance of contractors. Also, please read the response to questions #20, 21 and 28.

28. **Question:** What is the length of relationship with your current provider?

Answer: The length of the relationship with the current provider will be 9 years upon the expiration of the current contract. This provider has won two competitive contract awards during this period.

29. **Question:** Would you consider working with an out-of-state contractor?

Answer: Since there is no restriction on the location of any Offeror within the RFP, the State would consider all Offerors whether in or out-of-state.

30. **Question:** What is the state's current travel situation; do you forecast a decline in bookings due to the current economy?

Answer: The State's current travel situation is still showing a normal pattern of activity to date and the State currently does not have any major restrictions on travel; however we are unable to project whether there will be any future decline in bookings due to the current economy.

31. **Question:** Is there interest in self-booking tools? If yes, how interested is the State and are there any tools the State has researched or would prefer?

Answer: There is no interest in self-booking tools nor is there a requirement in the RFP to provide such.

32. **Question:** Are there any needs for meetings management, meetings registration, convention management?

Answer: There are no needs for meetings management, meetings registration and convention management services and those services are not required in this RFP.

33. **Question:** What is the current fee schedule for the State? Does the State pay any fees beyond the \$16.50 fee noted in the RFP?

Answer: The current fee schedule is \$16.50 for each paper or each e-ticket. The State does not pay any other fees to the contractor.

34. **Question:** Does the State pay an annual management fee?

Answer: The State does not pay an annual management fee.

35. **Question:** Is the State currently receiving unused ticket management and reporting?

Answer: The State is currently receiving unused ticket management and reporting.

36. **Question:** Is Section 3, Scope of Work, where I would find the questions for the Technical response (4.4.5) to the RFP requirements?

Answer: There are no specific questions we have identified that need answering in RFP. Our requirement is that each Offeror propose a solution to the requirements as described in the RFP. For example, Offerors should respond to Section 4.4.5 by preparing a response for each major element in Section 3 (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, etc) and in the order listed in Section 3.

37. **Question:** RFP Page 16, Paragraph 3.3.6 states that "All users of the Contract shall be entitled to credit for unused refundable tickets. Refunds shall be processed for refundable tickets and shall be made in the form of a credit refund receipt, with the credit applied to the user Agency credit business travel account." Please define what is meant by "in the form of a credit refund receipt"?

Answer: The phrase “in the form of a credit refund receipt” means that the refundable ticket should be processed through the ARC system and credited to the agency’s common carrier account. RFP section 3.3.6 is revised to include this narrative. See Amendment #2, section 3.

38. **Question:** RFP Page 18, Paragraph 3.4.6 requires international bus charter services. Will the state require any domestic bus charter services?

Answer: We may require this service, but we are unable to determine the levels of service at this time.

39. **Question:** RFP Page 19, Paragraph 3.4.11 requires that “The Contractor shall have the capability and provide wholesale/consolidator tickets when savings exist over standard coach fares or other available discounts.” Can the State please clarify what the Contractor’s duties and obligations are to secure wholesale/consolidator tickets? Can the State give examples of situations in which the Contractor is expected to procure wholesale/consolidator tickets?

Answer: If proposed, the Contractor shall provide wholesale/consolidator tickets when savings exist over standard coach fares or other available discounts. Whether the Offeror has the capability to provide wholesale/consolidator tickets will be a factor considered under Offeror’s Experience and Capabilities. Please see amended RFP sections 3.4.11 and 4.4.6.1. See Amendment #2, sections 6 and 10.

40. **Question:** RFP Page 19, Paragraph 3.4.13 requires the Contractor to “provide special travel service for and coordinate all aspects of cabinet-level employee travel, Governor’s overseas trade missions which could include 50 or more travelers, and executive group travel both domestically and internationally.” Can the State please define “special travel services” and further identify what services are included?

Answer: The term “special travel services” will be defined as any special accommodations that may be required to address the Governor’s security detail. All other travel requirements should be consistent with general State travel. See Amendment #2, section 1.

41. **Question:** RFP page 18, Paragraph 3.4.7(c) states “the Contractor shall receive no compensation for lodging services” and paragraph 3.4.8(c) states “the Contractor shall receive no compensation for rental vehicle services.” We assume that this means the Contractor shall not charge the State or the traveler for such services. As you may know, some hotel properties and some car rental vendors do provide commissions to travel agencies in accordance with industry practice or supplier agreements. We assume this is acceptable for the travel agency to receive such commissions as such revenues offset expenses and enable lower transaction fees? Please clarify.

Answer: These provisions are intended to mean that there will be no commission provided by the State for car rental or hotel services. This solicitation does not prevent

the vendor from receiving a commission from a hotel or car rental vendor. See Amendment #2, sections 4 and 5.

42. **Question:** RFP page 19, paragraph 3.5.1 requires the contractor to provide a monthly sales activity report to each Travel Coordinator, with a consolidated copy sent to the Contract Manager “**within five (5) calendar days** after the last day of each month.” Paragraph 3.5.2 requires that a monthly exception report be provided to the Contract Manager, which shall identify every reservation where a lowest logical fare that was lower than the accepted fare was offered but declined by the passenger and the reason the lower fare was declined “by the **5th workday** after the end of each month” One requirement is for the 5th calendar day and the other is for the 5th working day. Is that correct? Most important, however, is that travel agencies close out their airline reporting monthly with the Airline Reporting Corporation (ARC). Due to variations on when months end, the 5-day deadline may result in incomplete data for some months. Would the State consider changing these deadlines to 10 business days after the last day of the reporting month?

Answer: We agree. The RFP Sections 3.5. 1 and 3.5.2 will be amended to change both deadlines to **10 business days** after the last day of the reporting month. See Amendment #2, section 7.

43. **Question:** Who was the travel management firm prior to Globetrotter?

Answer: Prior to Globetrotter (who has held two consecutive contracts) it was Omega World Travel.

44. **Question:** Emergency After-Hours – the 24 hour emergency after hours is many times abused as a normal extension of business hours and not used for emergency reasons only. GSA for Federal Contracts and many other States recognize the cost of maintaining a 24 hour service and provide that an extra charge can be billed to the traveler for calls that are not an emergency?

Answer: Under the contract resulting from this RFP, an extra charge will not be allowed for billing travelers for calls that are after hours.

45. **Question:** Are we allowed to include supporting documents in the Technical Proposal?

Answer: Yes, supporting documents are allowed to the extent they support how the Offeror will meet the requirements of this RFP.

46. **Question:** If our MBE sub-contractors are not certified now but will be certified by the July 1, 2009 start date of the new contract, do we have to name contractors for MBE subcontracting participation with the written presentation of our bid on April 2, 2009 or can we commit without naming an organization and then submit the forms?

Answer: An Offeror must identify its Maryland MDOT-certified MBEs at the time of proposal submission and may not commit to the goal without naming its MBE

subcontract organizations. A business whose MBE certification is pending at the time of proposal submission is not recognized as an MDOT-certified MBE and will be rejected.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Failure to provide Maryland MDOT-certified MBEs at the time of proposal submission or to properly complete and submit the Forms D-1 and D-2 will result in a Offeror's proposal being determined reasonably not susceptible for being selected for contract award. Deficiencies on MBE forms may not be cured after submission. See also responses to questions 1 and 14.