



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lieutenant Governor

DAVID R. BRINKLEY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES
PROJECT NO. 050B0600001
Travel Services for Maryland State Agencies
August 30, 2019

Ladies/Gentlemen:

This List of Questions and Responses, questions #1 through #19, 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. Was Tab F intentionally not used in the Technical proposal?

RESPONSE 1: Yes. On page 42 of the RFP, the State asks Offerors to submit both its response to requirements and work plan and its qualifications and types of staff proposed to be utilized under the Contract under Tab E. Typically Tab F would be where the qualifications and types of staff would be presented, but a minor stylistic change was made so that the subsections of 5.3.2(G) through 5.3.2(O) would have letters that correspond with the requested tabs.

2. With regards to the Veterans requirement of 1% of the contract, is the VSBE Requirement limited to State of Maryland VSBE companies?

RESPONSE 2: No the VSBE requirement is not limited to Maryland VSBEs. Veteran owned businesses that possess veteran certification from vetbiz.org are eligible so long as they are properly certified to perform the types of work for which they are a proposed VSBE subcontractor.

3. What does it mean in Section 3.3 of the RFP when it states that the Department reserves the right to reduce or withhold Contract payment in the event the Contractor does not provide the Department with all required deliverables within the time frame specified in the Contract or otherwise breaches the terms and conditions of the Contract until such time as the Contractor brings itself into full compliance with the Contract? Travel agencies by license act only as agents for these services and have no power over the delivery of services. Can you describe what deliverables could be? Does it apply to airline tickets, hotel accommodations or car rental services?

45 Calvert Street • Annapolis, MD 21401-1907

Tel: 410-260-4053 • Fax: 410-974-2585 • Toll Free: 1-800-705-3493 • TTY Users: Call via Maryland Relay

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RESPONSE 3: “Deliverables” are all services to be rendered by a Contractor that appear as Contract requirements. The State typically would not withhold payment from a Contractor unless other avenues to rectify vendor underperformance were already implemented without success. Although there is no required order of escalation for resolving complaints from using agencies/entities against a Contractor, typically informal complaints would be escalated to a formal written request for corrective action, which would only then be escalated to the withholding of contract payments, finally escalating to termination of the Contract.

4. RFP section 2.1.5 states that a contract award does not ensure a contractor will receive any business under the contract. What is the reasoning behind not requiring usage of the contract? Please explain how Executive Branch Agency required use of the travel program may result in the contractor not receiving any business?

RESPONSE 4: The Department authorizes using agencies/entities to use this Contract, but only Executive Branch agencies are specifically required to use this Contract in the normal course of business. The Department has no ability to make the use of this Contract mandatory for using agencies/entities outside the Executive Branch, and does not mandate the use of this Contract in emergency situations. In unusual situations where it is impractical or impossible to use the State travel services contractor, Executive Branch employees may make alternative travel arrangements.

5. Can the State provide information on how many of the 6,215 tickets were for Executive Branch travel vs Legislative, Judicial or University travel?

RESPONSE 5: The State is unable to answer this question. That information is not recorded.

6. In reviewing the RFP and the travel regulations, we do not see a clear definition of lowest logical airfare. We assume that the lowest logical airfare is the fare from BWI as a starting point, is that assumption correct? Does the State use non-refundable fares in determining lowest logical fares? Is there any additional guidance regarding the definition of “lowest logical airfare”

RESPONSE 6: The “lowest logical airfare” requirement is intended to control travel costs incurred by State personnel travelling under this Contract. This Contract does not require, but would typically utilize, non-refundable airfares. BWI Marshall Airport is the preferred point of departure for air travel booked under this Contract and should be used whenever convenient and cost effective. The standard enumerated in COMAR is that of a prudent person traveling for personal reasons. It would not be prudent, for example, for anyone to book multiple connecting flights with lengthy layovers to save a small amount of money. Likewise, a prudent person would not book accommodations in a hotel that is far from a conference venue to save a small amount of money. It is expected that any vendor selected as the Contractor for this Contract would understand the “prudent person” standard in their performance of Contract duties.

7. RFP section 2.2.3 states “the information required to be maintained by the contractor, if not already part of the Contractor’s standard PNR information, shall include at a minimum: State authorization number, name of traveler, itinerary, ticket cost, form of payment, any comments regarding declined lower fares, if itinerary includes personal travel, Travel Coordinator name, Travel Arranger name and phone number, if different from Travel Coordinator, and the address of where the paper itinerary will be mailed.” The RFP states that 90% of reservations are booked online. For online reservations, how is the travel coordinator name provided when the reservation is booked by a travel arranger?

RESPONSE 7: The Contractor will be provided with a list of Travel Coordinators for each using agency/entity. Typically individuals will arrange their own travel but depending on the specific procedures used by the agency/entity in question, this information may be supplied by the travel arranger.

8. Please describe the requirement for the contractor to obtain prices from consolidators rather than obtaining the lowest fare directly from the Global Distribution System used by the contractor? For the calendar year 2018 of the 6,216 tickets issued, how many were consolidator tickets and what was the total amount for consolidator tickets?

RESPONSE 8: There is no requirement to use consolidator tickets if no savings would be provided by the use of consolidator tickets or if other means of receiving a lower fare are available. The State does not compile reports about whether tickets were purchased as consolidator tickets so no data is available as to how many consolidator tickets are sold.

9. When reviewing the RFP and the travel regulations, we do not see any language whether the lowest logical airfare should be based upon use of non-refundable fares or only refundable fares. Please clarify.

RESPONSE 9: Because refundable fares generally cost more, the State typically uses non-refundable fares. However, there is no prohibition against refundable fares and the lowest logical fare may be a refundable fare, or a refundable fare may be specifically selected for a variety of supportable reasons.

10. RFP section 2.3.5(e) states “Provide domestic transportation services as follows: Provide notification by voice message confirmed by an email.” It is unclear what this means. Please clarify.

RESPONSE 10: The State is requiring its travel services provider to contact the traveler by both phone and email.

11. Can the State provide the number of hotel reservations and the number of car rental reservation booked in 2018? Does the State have a negotiated hotel program or a negotiated car program? In booking car rentals, our travelers entitled to purchase the car rental damage insurance?

RESPONSE 11: In 2018 there were 2,226 hotel reservation bookings and a total of 10,767 nights booked. In 2018 there were 658 separate vehicle rentals for a total of 1,831 days. The State does not have a negotiated hotel or car program at this time. The State of Maryland is self-insured, eliminating the need to purchase elective insurance from a vehicle rental agency.

12. RFP section 2.2.13 references Meeting and Conference Planning. To fully understand the workload for staffing purposes, can the State provide the number of meetings and/or conferences booked in 2018?

RESPONSE 12: The sample figures provided on Attachment B-1, Financial Proposal Form, are based on historical usage. 25 is a close approximation of the number of meetings and conferences booked in 2018.

13. RFP section 3.11.1 states “When Key Personnel are identified for the Contract, the following apply: A. Key Personnel shall be available to perform Contract requirements as of the NTP Date. Unless

explicitly authorized by the Contract Monitor or specified in the Contract, Key Personnel shall be assigned to the State of Maryland as a dedicated resource.” Is the requirement for dedicated key personnel that manage the State of Maryland contract exclusively, or can key personnel be designated so that they manage the State of Maryland contract as well as other contracts for the vendor?

RESPONSE 13: The State does not require designated Key Personnel working on this Contract to be exclusive to this Contract. “Dedicated Resource” in this context refers to the Substitution of Key Personnel provisions of the RFP.

14. How is travel paid for? Are airfares charged to a centrally billed State account or billed to a traveler’s individual government or personal credit card. How are the contractors fees charged – at point of sale to a credit card or invoiced?

RESPONSE 14: Travel is not booked to a centrally billed State account. Each agency/entity pays via a corporate purchasing card or via agency funds. Contractor’s fees are charged at the point of sale.

15. Under RFP Section 3.7.4, Information Technology, the RFP is specific about Data Security in several sub sections. Travel Management Companies hand off information and in our case PCI compliant data to several third party companies which we have no control over their security measures and we cannot mandate remedies. How does the State intend to qualify these types of third party vendors that are not part of an internal data storage program with a travel management company?

RESPONSE 15: Offerors are urged to read and understand the State’s data security protocols as outlined in the RFP. The State is aware that our Contractors may not have control over the security measures of third parties that may enter the chain of data custody during the performance of the Contract. By using the best practices and industry standards required by this RFP, and prudently partnering with responsible third parties that maintain similar practices in data handling, the potential for the loss or misuse of State data is reduced to the greatest extent possible.

16. We have been going over and over the Economic Benefit section of the RFP. Our understanding from the Pre Bid Meeting was that the State was not looking for actual revenue numbers but wanted a detailed narrative of the economic impact of the travel management recycle fees. So, my question, can you clarify section 5.3.2(N)(7) which states “Tax revenues to be generated for Maryland and its political subdivisions a result of the contract.” Furthermore, “Subcontract dollars committed to Maryland small business and MBE’s.

RESPONSE 16: As stated at the Pre Proposal Conference, do not reveal your proposed pricing by including figures in your response to the Economic Benefits section of the RFP. In the past some firms have attempted to calculate the dollar amount per 1000 dollars of contract value, which provides useful data without revealing pricing info. Other vendors have used a narrative description and omitted any specific numbers. As a reminder, the economic benefit response is the lowest weighted part of an Offeror’s technical proposal.

17. Was it the State’s intention to put \$10,000,000.00 as a requirement for cyber insurance for the travel services contract?

RESPONSE 17: Please re-read the requirements in RFP section 3.6.1(D). This only applies for service offerings hosted by a Contractor, typically in the context of Information Technology contracts where sensitive or protected State data is on a platform hosted by a Contractor. Travel services providers are not web hosts, but rather use third parties to provide this service.

18. RFP Section 2.2.5 says “For other than Consolidator tickets the Contractor shall only charge a fee per ticket issued to the State Traveler. The Contractor shall not charge any fee for any cancellation, voids, refunds, or waivers.”

By "consolidator fares" is this referring to agency wholesale fares? This means the State is interested in purchasing inventory through the Contractor for a fee, but the State will be the ones to use a GDS to handle the booking themselves. Is this correct?

RESPONSE 18: That is not correct. Consolidator tickets are large blocks of tickets purchased from major airlines by a consolidator at deep discounts off of the regular published fare that are resold at attractive rates. The State will not use a GDS in this context. RFP Section 2.2.5 contemplates cost savings in instances where our Statewide Travel Contractor is able to secure discounted ticket pricing via volume purchasing. It also says that for all non-Consolidator purchases, which will be the vast majority of airfare bookings, only a per ticket fee may be charged.

19. In RFP section 5.2.8 we need clarification.

1. Financial proposal and ALL SUPPORTING MATERIALS in Excel format. The financial spread sheet is self-explanatory but what would be an example in excel format that could be used for supporting materials. Are you just referring to Form B-1 throughout this instruction or are other materials permitted?

2. Financial proposals – the reference to searchable Adobe PDF format, does this mean there can be written explanations to support form B-1?

RESPONSE 19: The only time an Offeror should submit any additional documentation, explanation, or supporting materials of any kind to accompany Financial Proposal Forms is when the RFP explicitly requests that info. Offerors who modify the Financial Proposal Form with conditional statements, alter the forms in any way, or invite additional post-award negotiations or offer services beyond what is contemplated in the RFP risk being found not susceptible for award and consequently eliminated from the award process.

Remember proposals are due on September 17, 2019 no later than 2:00 p.m. If there are questions concerning this solicitation, please contact me via e-mail at christopher.hautala@maryland.gov or call me at (410) 260-4081 or contact Lola Tiamiyu at lola.tiamiyu1@maryland.gov or call her at (410) 260-4053.

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By:

Chris Hautala
Procurement Officer