



Questions and Answers No. 5
Request for Proposal MDM0031023850
Systems Operations Support RFP
January 29, 2016

Ladies/Gentlemen: This list of questions and responses is being issued to clarify certain information contained in the above referenced RFP. Nothing in MHBE's response to these questions is to be construed as agreement to or acceptance by the MHBE of any statement or interpretation on the part of the Offeror.

1. **Question:** Please provide six or three month's volumetric data on number of requests related to software configuration management.

RESPONSE: This information will not be provided.

2. **Question:** Please list down the number of releases in following categories and the approx. duration for deployment for each category. (1. Small, 2. Medium, 3. Large, 4. Emergency)

RESPONSE: There were approximately 6 large, 2 medium, 4 small and 5 'hot fix' releases deployed into production during the calendar year 2015. The deployment times range from 1 - 5 hours depending on the size and complexity of the deployments.

3. **Question:** How much of the Software Build and Deployment processes are automated? Kindly list down the tools used for automation as well.

RESPONSE: The deployment processes on all lower tier environments such as Development, Integration and User Acceptance Testing (UAT) are automated. The deployments on the other environments such as the Staging, Training and Production are currently manual. The tools such as Bamboo, Ant and Subversion are used for automation.

4. **Question:** Please clarify: are we required to submit resumes/qualifications for all positions listed, or should we just include the Key Personnel/Leads in the proposal?

RESPONSE: Please submit the proposal as stated in the RFP Section 4.4.2.6 Experience and Qualifications of Proposed Staff.

5. **Question:** In reference to Section 3.9.7 (page 51): The RFP states that any Subcontractor providing primary services under this Contract shall obtain and maintain the same levels of insurance and shall provide the Contract Monitor with the same documentation as is required of the Contractor.

- If the Prime is ultimately responsible for the full execution of the Contract then is it necessary for the Subcontractor to hold the same insurance as is required from the Prime?



- Will you consider modifying the requirements or eliminating the stated in this section for Subcontractors? As it stands the requirements create prohibitive requirements for MBE & other Subcontractors, many of whom are small businesses.

RESPONSE: The Subcontractors shall obtain and maintain the same levels of insurance as the Prime.

6. **Question:** Due to the snow emergency which started on Friday, January 22nd and still continues, would the state consider extending the deadline for the proposal until February 12th?

RESPONSE: MHBE has extended the deadline to respond to the RFP to Wednesday, February 10th, 2016. Please refer to RFP Amendment # 4.

7. **Question:** Can the state describe the known Single Points of Failure (SPOFs) at the Network, Server, and Application Level?

RESPONSE: This information will not be provided.

8. **Question:** What is the level of redundancy for Network Devices, Servers, Power, Communications Lines, and Data Centers (N+1) or (2N)?

A. Is the redundancy at the component level?

Are all failover devices considered “hot” or are their “warm” devices that require manual intervention?

RESPONSE: As per FISMA’s FIPS 199 standard, the System’s availability is regarded as moderate. Availability controls are built to meet this specification. There are hardware and software failovers available on the production systems. Most of these failovers are automated and some may require manual intervention.

9. **Question:** What kind of data replication is in place? Is it “hot” or “warm”?

RESPONSE: Replication between High Availability Databases is “hot” and replication for disaster recovery is “warm”.

10. **Question:** Are hardware components utilized as failovers geographically dispersed?

RESPONSE: Yes.

11. **Question:** What are the longest recovery times for failover devices for example: Network attached storage devices that may require hours of manual failover?

RESPONSE: This information will not be provided.

12. **Question:** Are the applications optimized to support automated failovers?

RESPONSE: Yes.



13. **Question:** Can the state please provide examples of the reports that are associated with the following deliverables: 3.2.2.2.3 Status Report, 3.2.2.2.4 SLA Report, 3.2.2.2.5 System Health Report, 3.2.2.2.6 System Outage Report, 3.2.2.2.7 System Resource Utilization Report, 3.2.2.2.8 Top 10 Reports, 3.2.2.2.9 Software Maintenance Report, 3.2.2.2.10 Batch Status Report, 3.2.2.2.11 Batch Trend Report.

RESPONSE: RFP Appendix D provides certain sample reports. The Contractor is expected to arrive at a mutually agreeable formats for these reports by collaboratively working with the hosting vendor and the MHBE IT team.

14. **Question:** In the answer set 1, influx of severity 1 and severity 2 tickets has been given. There are no information for Severity 3 and severity 4. Are there any system to track severity 3 and 4 tickets? if there are, Could that information be provided for last year across applications and technologies in scope?

RESPONSE: There is an information system run by the hosting vendor to track severity 3 and severity 4 tickets. The severity 3 and 4 tickets are predominantly managed by the hosting vendor and no further information on this will be provided.

15. **Question:** Is there a current list of scheduled activities that the state uses? If so, can the state please provide? Does the state expect the contractor to follow this same set of scheduled activities?

RESPONSE: Yes, there are various scheduled activities. The Contractor will be provided with the details upon NTP.

16. **Question:** Who owns the Wide Area Network connections for the HBX?

RESPONSE: MHBE and the hosting vendor.

17. **Question:** Can the state provide the current solution diagram, even at a high level, for the purposes of this RFP?

RESPONSE: Additional details are provided in RFP Amendment 2 under Appendix A - HBX System Overview, Hardware and Software List. No pictorial representation of the HBX solution will be provided.

18. **Question:** During transition, will the contractor be able to observe how the incumbent handles incidents and reports?

RESPONSE: Yes.

19. **Question:** The staffing roles described in Section 3.7 seem overly prescriptive and seem to relate to the incumbent team rather than RFP requirements. Does the contractor have the flexibility to create a staffing plan which meets the requirements of the program with proposed personnel who may not have the "exact match" – yet has all the skills as a team?



RESPONSE: The assertion about the RFP Section 3.7 Staffing Requirements/Plan is incorrect. Please refer to the RFP Section 4.4.2.6 Experience and Qualifications of Proposed Staff (Submit under TAB E) and Section 4.4.2.7 Staffing Plans for more details. Offerors are encouraged to submit staffing plans that they ascertain shall best meet the scope of this RFP.

20. **Question:** Can the contractor use the standard industry practice of substituting experience for education for determining qualifications for roles on the contract?

RESPONSE: Yes.

21. **Question:** Can the state please provide a table that describes the substitution of education/certifications for experience for proposed roles identified in the RFP?

RESPONSE: No.

22. **Question:** None of the roles mentioned in the RFP are designated as key. Is it permissible for an Offeror to propose a team that contains alternate and or/ additional roles?

RESPONSE: Yes. Offerors are encouraged to submit staffing plans that they ascertain shall better meet the scope of this RFP.

23. **Question:** If contractor employees have already undergone a criminal background check, does a new check need to be initiated for the purposes of this contract?

RESPONSE: Yes, a new criminal background check needs to be completed.

24. **Question:** From a vendor perspective, how will the agency provide access to connect to the systems? Is there a process in place and Technical resources and IT Infrastructure in place?

RESPONSE: Yes, there are processes and technical resources available for access provisioning.

25. **Question:** From a vendor perspective, how will the agency provide access to connect to the systems? Are there any technical functions already present in the process?

RESPONSE: Yes, there are processes and technical resources available for access provisioning.

26. **Question:** Is it a full time Project? (or) Can there be an approach towards On-Call support?

RESPONSE: Please refer to the Section 3.2 Scope of Work. The Offeror should reasonably anticipate employing full-time dedicated resources to successfully meet the scope of this RFP.

27. **Question:** Is Telecommuting on Remote basis (or) should the staff work in the Vendor office premises?



RESPONSE: It is not required for the Vendor to perform their services at MHBE offices. However, based on the project needs, there may be situations when the Vendor is expected to perform its services at the MHBE office locations. As stated in the RFP Section 3.12, MHBE shall provide the Contractor's staff with work space during normal State business hours.

28. **Question:** Is there a prescribed structure of key and non-key resources for the 24x7 support?

RESPONSE: Please refer to the RFP Section 4.4.2.6 Experience and Qualifications of Proposed Staff (Submit under TAB E) and Section 4.4.2.7 Staffing Plans for more details. Offerors are encouraged to submit staffing plans that they ascertain shall best meet the scope of this RFP.

29. **Question:** Will an offshore support model be non-compliant vs. US based remote support?

RESPONSE: Offshore support model (staffing resources outside the United States) is unacceptable.

30. **Question:** Does the State want the third attachment labeled "Systems Operations Support for the HBX System RFP #MDM0031023850" or "PIA"?

RESPONSE: The third attachment should be labeled "PIA".

31. **Question:** Each section of the Technical Proposal shall be separated by a TAB. This is an e-submission, does the State want PDF bookmark instead of tabs?

RESPONSE: PDF bookmark is acceptable

32. **Question:** The SLA table on page 43 of the RFP appears to have a missing SLA. Sec. 3.4.6.6 has two separate metrics incorporated into one SLA (one for response time and the other for resolution time). Would the State please confirm that the resolution time metric should be listed as a separate SLA (numbered Sec. 3.4.6.7)?

RESPONSE: Yes. The tables in RFP Sections 3.4.6 Service Level Metrics and Measurements and 3.5.4 Assessment of Liquidated Damages have been amended in Amendment 5 to correct the numbering sequence.

33. **Question:** Would the State please confirm that SLA #3.4.6.4 is for Severity 1 response time, and that SLA #3.4.6.5 is for Severity 1 resolution time? Likewise, please confirm that SLA #3.4.6.6 is for Severity 2 response time, and that SLA #3.4.6.7 is for Severity 2 resolution time.

RESPONSE: Yes. The tables in RFP Sections 3.4.6 Service Level Metrics and Measurements and 3.5.4 Assessment of Liquidated Damages have been amended in Amendment 5 to correct the numbering sequence.

34. **Question:** Would the State please confirm that the LD deduction percentages (e.g. 10%) would be applied against Contractor's monthly invoice for the period in which the failure occurred?



RESPONSE: Yes, please refer to RFP Section 3.5.4.

35. **Question:** Due to the severe weather in the area, will the MHBE consider a two week extension of the proposal closing date?

RESPONSE: MHBE has extended the proposal closing date to Wednesday, February 10th, 2016. Please refer to RFP Amendment # 4.

36. **Question:** Is ITIL certification for the System Operations Manager, Lead required or will a commensurate level of experience be acceptable?

RESPONSE: A commensurate level of experience is acceptable.

37. **Question:** Is PMP certification for the System Operations Manager, Lead required or will a commensurate level of experience be acceptable?

RESPONSE: A commensurate level of experience is acceptable.

38. **Question:** Is it correct to assume that any application changes and testing required because of system and software upgrades will be the responsibility of the application vendor and is not a requirement of this RFP?

RESPONSE: Yes, any application changes and testing are the responsibility of the application vendor.

39. **Question:** Is the MD-HBX application hosted in the same data center as all the other applications used by the State of Maryland or is the MD-HBX hosted separately by a third party vendor.

RESPONSE: The MD-HBX is hosted separately by a third party vendor.

40. **Question:** If the MD-HBX application is hosted on a shared data-center then how is the support to MD-HBX related Infrastructure is being performed. For any changes or troubleshoot on the MD-HBX servers, does MD-HBX M&O personnel has to engage with the data-center personnel? Can you please elaborate the engagement process and any service level objective (SLO)?

RESPONSE: The MD-HBX is not hosted in a shared data center. For any changes or troubleshooting tasks on the MD-HBX servers, MD-HBX System Operations vendor shall collaboratively work with the hosting vendor. Engagements are typically established through defined processes, regular meetings and other modes of communications.

41. **Question:** We did not see any mention of supporting or performing the network management services such as IP management, firewall configurations, DHCP management, LAN switches and router configurations. Can you please clarify who is responsible to do these activities for the MD-HBX application and how will the MD-HBX M&O personnel will engage with the other team.



RESPONSE: The network management services are provided by the hosting vendor and are out of scope of this RFP. Engagements are typically established through defined processes, regular meetings and other modes of communications.

42. **Question:** We assume that the desktop support for the call-center personnel supporting HBX application is out of scope of this RFP. Please confirm.

RESPONSE: Desktop support for the call-center personnel is out of scope of this RFP.

43. **Question:** Requirement is for system monitoring to be performed across multiple environments. We understand "UPTIME" is used in production to monitor the environment. Please clarify if Uptime or any other monitoring tool is available in all environments and servers? Is the process of generating reports in Section 3.2.2.2 deliverables automated?

RESPONSE: MD-HBX uses Uptime Infrastructure Manager in the production environment. Other tools that are used to monitor the environment are Foglight, VMware and Google Analytics. Some of the report generation functions are automated.

44. **Question:** For upgrades to the third party products, please confirm if the M&O team need to work directly on the upgrades or coordinate with different teams for the upgrades.

RESPONSE: Upgrades to third party products are part of the scope of this RFP. The Contractor shall work directly as well as coordinate with the various teams to facilitate the upgrades.

45. **Question:** As we understand, the core application of MD-HBX was developed and maintained as a product by Deloitte LLP. For any patches or upgrades to this core application, will Deloitte LLP be still responsible? Is there an agreed SLO defined between M&O team and application development team?

RESPONSE: The deployment of code, upgrades and patches are within the scope of this RFP. However, software development and fixes are the responsibility of the application development vendor. There are Service Level Objectives with the incumbent M&O vendor.

46. **Question:** For the sizing and estimation purpose, please confirm the software/hardware listed in Appendix A will be the final list. Do you see any addition to this list and if so please let us know a projection for the same?

RESPONSE: No changes to the software or hardware list are anticipated at this time. However as the Exchange grows over time, it is possible that the technology could change and we would expect that the Systems Operations vendor would be able to adapt to the changes.

47. **Question:** Section 3.2.1.3 requires maintaining and notification (RFP Section 3.2.2.2.9) of expired licenses. Does MD-HBX utilize a license manager? If so what software is used?

RESPONSE: IBM License Metric Tool (ILMT) is used to manage IBM licenses.



48. **Question:** We understand deployments across all environments (viz. Dev, Integration, System Test, UAT, Staging, Training, Production) is in scope. How many deployments are planned over a calendar year for lower environments and for production environments?

RESPONSE: There were approximately 6 large, 2 medium, 4 small and 5 'hot fix' releases deployed into production during the calendar year 2015.

49. **Question:** How many batch jobs are scheduled on a daily, weekly or monthly (bimonthly) basis? What is the failure rate (# of batch jobs failing)?

RESPONSE: There are approximately 30 daily, 5 weekly and 15 monthly batch jobs. The batch job failure rate is less than 1%.

50. **Question:** Is the tool Uptime deployed or configured in Production to automatically notify on any failure in batch job as well. Is this monitoring tool configured in lower environments?

RESPONSE: MD-HBX uses Uptime Infrastructure Manager in the production environment. We are using the CA Scheduler email notification to notify any batch failures. Other tools that are used to monitor the environment are Foglight, VMware and Google Analytics.

51. **Question:** In Appendix-A, we see the tool Foglight being used to monitor the production resource utilization. Is the same tool being configured to monitor the resource utilization in the lower environment? Are there enough licenses for the tool to do so?

RESPONSE: Foglight is used primarily in the Production and Staging environments. Foglight is not used in the lower environments. Yes, there are sufficient licenses for using this tool.

52. **Question:** We understand that the Disaster Recovery (DR) site is for the Production environment. Can you clarify if there is any DR site established for Staging and other lower environments?

RESPONSE: The DR site is configured to host all environments.

53. **Question:** Referring to Incident management process there is no process defined for problem management when an incident requires a code fix or bug fix. Is problem management being handled by other team? Is there a SLO between the M&O and Problem Management team?

RESPONSE: Code fixes are managed by the application vendor. Only the deployment of the code fixes is in scope of this RFP.

54. **Question:** We understand that HBX System's data center is hosted at the hosting contractor's end? For Database Management activities the HBX M&O team will have to interact with the data-center team. Is there a defined process of engagement and is there an established SLO? Please elaborate.



RESPONSE: HBX System Operations vendor shall collaboratively work with the hosting vendor. Engagements are typically established through defined processes, regular meetings and other modes of communications.

55. **Question:** The Incident management process workflow illustrates that the hosting vendor is responsible to communicate outages, incidents through tickets, emails. Does the SLA response times apply after the start of hosting vendor's communication to vendor?

RESPONSE: Yes, the SLA response times do not apply when the System Operations vendor is not responsible for the incident. However, if the incident occurs due to the fault of the System Operations vendor, the SLA response time measurement would start when the incident actually occurred rather than when it was reported.

56. **Question:** We understand that Production, Training, Staging, UAT, System Test, Integration and Development environments and any other MD-HBX environments that may be implemented in the future to be serviced as part of the contract.

A) Has the SLA mentioned under 3.4.6 section applicable only for Production?

B) What's the servicing window for Non-Production environments?

C) Is there any projections on how many new environment will be setup in a year and over a period of 4 years?

RESPONSE:

A) Yes. However, the System Operations vendor should be mindful of the other environments as they are significantly important for the overall operations of the exchange.

B) This is variable and depends on project workflows and use of those environments.

C) There are no such projections available at this time.

57. **Question:** Point-b of Section 4.4.2.5 states that the offeror shall provide a Work-Plan as part of the response and this work-plan shall include the specific methodology and processes to meet the 14 scope items. But in section 3.2.2.2.2 the Work Plan should have resource loading, task-level details, predecessors/successors, etc. In other words, this Work Plan is a MPP. Please clarify what level of details is required is Work-Plan while submitting it as part of the RFP Response.

RESPONSE: The Offeror shall submit a Work Plan based on the available information at the time of submitting the proposal and shall contain all relevant information in the Offeror's best judgement to meet the scope of work of this RFP.

58. **Question:** We understand from the answers that there were 73 L1, L2 tickets for 2015 calendar year with approximately 6 tickets in a month. These number is on the lower side. Can you please elaborate? Also does the team participate in accumulating the knowledge base or activities related to determining the root causes? Is the team involved in any other activities?



RESPONSE: The answer provided was accurate. The System Operations vendor is expected to participate or own some sections of the root cause analysis as appropriate.

Date Issued: January 29, 2016
Michelle Compton
Procurement Officer