

**2B0KB-16-4710 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Q1	<p>Please confirm that resources are not to be submitted for evaluation as part of the bid, and that the evaluation is based solely on the corporate requirements with resources being evaluated at the TA stage. The reason for the uncertainty is based on several conflicting statements throughout the RFP, as follows:</p> <p>a. Section 3.2.1 (v) states: <i>“The technical bid must include résumés for the resources identified in the bid solicitation. The technical bid must demonstrate that each proposed individual meets the qualification requirements described (including any educational requirements, work experience requirements, and professional designation or membership requirements) as of bid closing date.”</i></p> <p>b. Attachment 2 to Part 4 states: <i>“For the resource proposed, the Bidder must include an up to date resume. To facilitate bid preparation and evaluation, Bidders must prepare and submit their proposal using the tables provided. When completing the resource grids, the specific information which demonstrates the requested criteria and reference to the page number of the resume should be incorporated so that the evaluator can verify this information. It is not acceptable that the tables should contain all the project information from the resume. Only the specific answer should be provided”</i>. However the Evaluation Grids in this section <u>only contain the Corporate requirements</u></p> <p>c. Appendix C to Annex A contains resource grids, BUT states <b><u>“To be used when contract awarded”</u></b></p>
A1	Resource Resumes are not required with Bid Submission.
Q2	For M1 and R1 Billed Days, please confirm that if a Bidder is using TBIPS contracts to demonstrate experience, matching the resource categories will be sufficient demonstration of similar work delivered, and no mapping is required.
A2	Yes, TBIPS contracts will be used to demonstrate experience.
Q3	<p>In M1 on page 23 of the RFP, bidders are required to demonstrate 880 billable days for the PIA Specialist - Level 3 category. Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) are typically standalone contracts with short durations, often of approximately 20 days. The current minimum billable days required by M1 for this category necessitates bidders demonstrate the equivalent of 44 PIAs – all within five contracts. Considering that the estimated number of resources required under the resulting contract is 1, will the Crown reduce the number of billable days that bidders are required to demonstrate to 220?</p>
A3	Canada will remove the requirement for billable days for PIA Specialist
Q4	<p>The Crown (SSC) has a vehicle in place called CITS that has four named suppliers to provide all Cyber Security Services within SSC.</p> <p>Would the Crown consider removing all the roles that are listed in the CITS supply arrangement as a supply arrangement is already in place?</p>
A4	No, all categories will remain
Q5	<p>The Government of Canada currently has a large number of websites built using Drupal and/or WordPress. With last year’s award to Adobe/Akamai/Amazon, there is a clear migration path to AEM for the next 8 years for all public facing websites. A number of the roles are web-related roles, however, there is no software listed against those roles.</p> <p>A WordPress Architect with the number of years of experience versus an AEM Architect with the same number of years vary greatly in terms of rate and availability. If a company was to assume a WordPress resource versus an AEM resource, the rate difference between the two can vary by \$200 - \$700 per day.</p> <p>Would the Crown consider defining the relevant skills that need to be supported so that pricing can be aligned appropriately?</p>
A5	<p>Shared Services Canada has a number of custom development back office applications built using both .Net and Java environments. In terms of application/web development classifications for this RFP, the ideal candidates would possess a working knowledge of .NET and Java technology which would include but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PHP</li> <li>- ASP (C# and VB)</li> <li>- Java</li> </ul>

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	- JSF
Q6	<p>The Crown has set the lower median band to 20%.</p> <p>The majority of the IT Services industry, regardless of size, typically engages subcontractors to deliver work of this nature. There are a few integrators that still employ staff but the stronger, more experienced candidates tend to lean toward doing contract work.</p> <p>Industry gross margins in the consulting community and with staffing agencies, given the market in recent years, have been below 20%. By setting the lower band at 20%, essentially two things are happening; first, the Crown is asking the successful bidder to deliver the work at next to “no profit” and second, the Crown is asking the subcontractors to drop their rates between 10% and 20% to cover operational costs and hopefully generate a profit over the length of the contract. This results in the Crown getting <i>less qualified resources</i>, as well as having greater <i>resource turnover</i> as contracts with better rates come to light and attract the resources away.</p> <p>Looking at the entire IT Consulting landscape, it is evident that there are several layers that make up the industry.</p> <p>The median band of close to 300 possible respondents, given the range and variances to the various bands, will not ensure that the Crown will receive the quality and value they seek.</p> <p>The model is so heavily weighted by staffing companies/agencies that the median band will reflect the rate of one of the lowest cost providers, which would then be further reduced by 20%. Would the Crown consider reducing the 20% below median to 10% below median and award 0 points for all firms 10% below the median? This will prevent bidders from presenting unreasonably low prices and the possible switching out of resources once the contract is awarded and to provide fair market value.</p> <p>To ensure value and quality are not diminished, 5% below the median will guarantee that firms will provide fair market values.</p>
A6	<p>To align with more recent procurement, the Crown will amend the median bands as follows:</p> <p>The Crown will set the higher median band to 15%.</p> <p>The Crown will set the lower median band to 10%.</p>
Q7	<p>Given that each Category of Personnel must be demonstrated through reference project experience that included at least 50% of the associated tasks listed in Annex B, would SSC consider numbering the bullets in the SOW to enable clearer cross-references in Bidder responses?</p>
A7	<p>If the bidder wishes to renumber the bullets, they may do so.</p>
Q8	<p>Regarding M1 and R1, Bidders are required to describe project experience related to specific Categories of Personnel. For privacy purposes, can Bidders describe the experience delivered by specific individuals by assigning a unique identifier (ie. Task Authorization Number, Purchase Order) to this work, rather than including the individual’s name?</p>
A8	<p>Canada would like the individual’s name</p>
Q9	<p>Please confirm that the chart on page 5 of the RFP lists I.5 IM Architect Level 3 twice in error.</p>
A9	<p>It is listed twice as there are two different criteria asking for different experience.</p>
Q10	<p>Regarding R2, may Bidders use an unlimited number of reference contracts to substantiate this criterion?</p>
A10	<p>Yes.</p>
Q11	<p>In regards to Corporate Mandatory requirement #1 (page 24 of 120) would the crown consider allowing firms to demonstrate their experience using a maximum of <b>10 projects</b> instead of the current <b>5 projects</b> which we believe is very restrictive.</p>
A11	<p>Yes, bidders may use a maximum of 10 projects</p>
Q12	<p>Q1. With regards to RFP Page 15 of 120 , 4.2 Technical Evaluation, paragraph C, it is indicated that “Joint Venture Experience: In accordance with Attachment 2 to PART 3 herein, except where expressly provided otherwise, at least one member of a joint venture Bidder must meet</p>

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	<p>any given mandatory and rated requirement of this solicitation. Joint venture members cannot pool their abilities to satisfy any single mandatory and rated requirement of this solicitation. Wherever substantiation of a mandatory and rated requirement is required, the Bidder is requested to indicate which joint venture member satisfies the requirement “</p> <p>Allowing pooling of billable days of JV Members in an existing TBIPS JV to meet a single mandatory or rated requirement would demonstrate corporate strength across the requested 24 categories (some security categories such as C7 and C16 are usually procured on multiple small contracts) and ensure the crown that a TBIPS JV can deliver across all its members.</p> <p>Will the crown permit TBIPS JV members to pool their abilities (billable days) to meet M1/R1?</p>
A12	Yes.
Q13	The SOW – Scope of Work states the Contractor must provide Informatics Professional Services in twenty-six categories. Please confirm number of categories
A13	There are 24 categories
Q14	Given that each Category of Personnel must be demonstrated through reference project experience that included at least 50% of the associated tasks listed in Annex B, would SSC consider numbering the bullets in the SOW to enable clearer cross-references in Bidder responses?
A14	PVR
Q15	Can the Crown please confirm that no resource resumes/grids are required in the technical proposal and that this will be required only at the TA stage once the contract is awarded?
A15	See Answer 1
Q16	For M1, the requirement for PIA Specialist - Level 3 billable days is 880 days. We are one of the largest cybersecurity and PIA providers in the National Capital region, and we find that the typical PIA engagement is 20-30 days under the supply arrangements we hold we might get 4 or 5 call ups(tasks) a year, and some time just 1, making the request to demonstrate 880 days over 5 contracts quite difficult. The restriction on the number of contracts (5) for all positions greatly reduces the pool of qualified suppliers. In the spirit of open and fair competition, would the Crown consider removing the limit on the number of contracts to demonstrate the requested number of billable days for all positions?
A16	Canada will remove the billable days requirement for PIA Specialist
Q17	With respect to M1 and R1, many times resources are provided through different supply arrangements or through 3rd party subcontractors. If the intention is for bidders to demonstrate experience in supplying resources through 5 contracts only, would the Crown accept experience gained by providing resources through a partner or 3rd party?
A17	Please see Q11. Canada will accept experience gained by providing resources through a partner or 3rd party
Q18	Since experience is to be demonstrated within the past 10 years, if a contract was issued in 2006, but the work on the contract did not start until 2007, would the Crown find this to be acceptable for M1 and R1 since the work occurred within the last 10 years?
A18	Yes, as long as the work occurred in the last ten years.
Q19	<p>In reference to M1 and R1: Since 2008, the Crown has moved away from bids that would demonstrate quality and capability to provide fixed outcomes to Supply Arrangements based on an arbitrary number gained by using the median rate of a number of bidders, and creating a lower band and allocating points. This has rewarded companies who were prepared to go low on price compared to the many competitors in town.</p> <p>Once that firm has been awarded the supply arrangement, they reach out to all incumbent resources and try to re-engage them all at a lower rate. Initially, most incumbents accept the deal in hand until they find a new contract at a higher rate elsewhere and they leave the contract. In some cases, the winning firm will negotiate with the client to use an alternate category with a higher rate to help keep highly desirable candidates.</p> <p>The winning firms also adopt the same process when filling new roles. If the next two or three</p>

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	<p>consultants don't work out, the 200 or so hours they billed for, while they were being placed into the client account now add on to the level of effort against future supply arrangements being contested. Number of hours, or number or resources, is not a very good indicator of a contract working well.</p> <p>By awarding contracts at larger volumes for longer periods, the new supply arrangement holder takes full credit for finding and engaging the talent provided to that department previously, where in reality, the firms that found and engaged the resources initially can't claim any credit even if they are subcontracting through the new third party. In most cases, they retain the business and lose the candidates outright even though the consultants are contractually restricted. The original provider is cut out of the equation.</p> <p>To demonstrate capacity, would the Crown consider asking the bidding firms to demonstrate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the size of their respective databases for the regions requiring support</li> <li>2) the tools companies use to recruit</li> <li>3) number of security clearances held or duplicated by the company</li> <li>4) steps that are taken to ensure supply of quality resources</li> </ol> <p>Demonstrating the volume of resources per role listed are metrics far more relevant to demonstrating a company's ability to service the needs of the department versus the number of hours billed for resources, which in most cases, that firm didn't find or place initially.</p> <p>Given the bar set by M1 of this bid (number of years per category), for R1, would the Crown consider awarding points based on billed revenue over the last 2 years for the provision of Professional Services using the same scale currently listed, with no regard to the categories, as long as they are IT related?</p>
A19	The categories will remain.
<b>Q20</b>	<b>Will the Crown agree to an extension?</b>
<b>A20</b>	<b>Canada will agree to an extension to May 16, 2017.</b>
Q21	In Attachment 2 to Part 4, M1 states that to be accepted, the referenced contracts must have been awarded within the 10 years preceding the closing date of this bid solicitation. Given that many contracts are multi-year in nature and may extend for 3-5+ years or more, will the Crown accept contracts that were awarded more than 10 years ago, as long as any billed days used to meet M1 occurred within the 10 years preceding the bid closing date?
A21	Yes.
Q22	In Attachment 2 to Part 4, M1 requires Bidders to demonstrate a minimum number of billed days in 23 categories, under a maximum number of contracts. Given Bidders are required to demonstrate experience in such a large number of categories, across a small number of contracts, we would like to request that the categories PIA Specialist – Level 3 and IT Security Design Specialist – Level 3 be removed from this requirement. These two categories encompass a specialized, niche skill set that is most often engaged through small contracts, and is not usually part of larger omnibus-type contracts. Furthermore, even niche security companies would struggle to demonstrate a min. 880 days in each of these categories, as the nature of the work these types of resources perform does not require a full-time level of effort. We respectfully ask the Crown to reconsider the inclusion of these two categories in M1 and R1.
A22	See A16
Q23	Given the latest amendment, complexity of this RFP and the amount of substantiation that will be required, we are requesting at minimum a two week extension to the latest amended due date of May 16 <sup>th</sup> to May 31 <sup>st</sup> .
A23	The deadline will remain as is.
Q24	It is the Crown's intention to award one contract for this solicitation. The RFP is extensive and the crown is limiting themselves to one company to service their needs upon contract award. There are 26 categories to be used on an "as and when required" basis and we believe it is in the interest of the crown to increase the number of contracts awarded to at least 3.
A24	One contract will be awarded.

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Q25	In reference to Q &A number 10, where the Crown has agreed to allow companies to uses unlimited number of reference contracts to substantiate this criterion, this could potentially have a company substantiating 10+ references, all of which need to complete Appendix B to Attachment 2. We are suggesting that the Crown asks for letters from the clients verifying this information and eliminate substantiation.
A25	Substantiation will remain as is.