REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

Application Performance Monitoring (APM) Solution

PURPOSE OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:

This is not a bid solicitation. This RFI will not necessarily result in any procurement action. A contract will not result from this activity.

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is seeking feedback from the vendor community on the availability of an Application Performance Monitoring (APM) Solution. Vendors are requested to provide specific responses to the product questions outlined herein. Vendors are requested to provide product whitepapers if available.

The objective of this Request for Information (RFI) is to gather the most current information possible from industry on the different Application Performance Monitoring (APM) Solutions as it relates to the CRA's business requirements.

The key objectives of the RFI include:

1. Receive responses from the vendor community about available solutions; and
2. Get a better understanding of the current and future trends; and
3. Vendors who establish via their response to the RFI how their products(s) meet the detailed solution requirements may be invited to provide an interactive demonstration and discuss in detail how their solutions meet the listed requirements.

Introduction

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Strategic Engineering & Technology Integration (SETI) Division in the Information Technology Branch is the Agency's lead for investigating a comprehensive, effective and efficient application performance monitoring solution for the Agency that can seamlessly integrate with CRA's current on-premise distributed and mainframe platforms with the ability to be expanded to include future cloud implementations.

Objective of Request for Information

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to determine if there are vendors who can provide a suitable cross platform application performance monitoring solution that can meet CRA's business requirements.

The CRA is exploring the possibility of acquiring a fully integrated application performance monitoring suite to improve our ability to perform end-user path analysis, transaction tracing, application health monitoring and log analytics. The solution will proactively monitor and provide diagnostic insights into applications across webpages, distributed components and mainframe components to identify degradation of services before they escalate into an incident. The solution must facilitate rapid root-cause triage of performance issues with the ability for deep dive drill down.

A suitable application performance monitoring solution will be able to efficiently and continuously capture comprehensive business transaction performance metrics for analysis, generate alert notification for application health degradation and be able to provide execution path tracing in a visual manner from an application page down through all components to the lowest level.

The solution must provide sophisticated end-user path analysis and related metric information to provide a better window into the user experience. Mainframe and distributed application performance information must be integrated to provide a unified picture of the end-to-end user experience. The unified picture would support tracing of the path of a transaction through the distributed and mainframe components (e.g. EJBs, CICs regions, COBOL programs, etc.), while providing access to performance metrics of the components in the path.

The solution must provide log analytic capabilities facilitating log ingestion/aggregation from multiple sources, indexing, complex searches and data visualization. It should be capable of correlating unstructured data with application performance events. These capabilities will support trending analysis, facilitate rapid root-cause triage of performance issues and provide the capability to proactively identify and address degradation of services before they escalate into an incident.

Background Information

The CRA is committed to enhancing digital service options to respond to the increasing expectations of Canadians for modern end-to-end digital interactions that are easy to use, fast, secure and reliable. Providing the Agency with a robust application performance monitoring solution is a key component in optimizing the user experience and minimizing the potential for, and duration of, outages to CRA's critical internal and external facing systems.

The CRA application suite is complex and interdependent, incorporating both mainframe and distributed components. Current performance monitoring efforts are more focused on infrastructure monitoring than application monitoring and the end-to-end user experience.

CRA Mainframe Environment (on-premise)

IBM z/OS, CICS (including DPL/remote invocation functionality and CICSPlex), Enterprise COBOL, DB2 and MQSeries.
Note: There is limited use of IDMS.

CRA Distributed Environment (on-premise)

Oracle WebLogic servers running on Solaris and RedHat Linux accessing mainframe components:
1. CICS applications on z/OS using CICS Transaction Gateway (CTG),
2. WebSphere MQ (MQ Series), and
3. DB2 via JDBC.

Appendix A – General Questions

A. 1 - General Information	
1.	What is your company's overall approach to application performance monitoring?
2.	Does your company offer Software as a service (SaaS) and/or on-premise APM solutions? If both solutions are offered highlight the differences.
3.	Does your solution support a cloud computing model and/or hybrid on-premise/cloud model? How?
4.	Is it possible to change from an on-premise solution to a SaaS solution? If so, what is required to move from your on-premise solution to your SaaS solution?
5.	Is your SaaS product available from a Canadian cloud? Which one?
6.	Can your solution integrate with ITSM tools? How?
7.	Is your solution compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0?
8.	What other products or services do you provide that are complementary to the application performance monitoring solution?
9.	What are the available licensing models for a complete application performance solution?
10.	What are the available licensing models for ongoing costs such as licensing, maintenance and support?
11.	What is the maximum number of concurrent users that can be running queries or reports before a degradation in the APM solution is experienced by users investigating root cause of incidents?
12.	Is it possible to have a near real time copy of the APM solutions environment for users to run trending reports and not impact the live production APM solution's response time?
A. 2 - Product Line	
1.	List and describe all the various features / applications / repositories that comprise your solution.
2.	Provide the system requirements of your solution. E.g.: CPU/cores, RAM, HDD capacity, O/S version(s), network, database requirements, clustering/high availability
3.	Describe in what capacity your solution provides user interfaces functionality and documentation in English and French.
A. 3 - Training, Documentation and Support	
1.	Describe the training services that your company offers (types of training and resources) as it pertains to your APM solution.
2.	In general, how much time would it take for a user to become self-sufficient in using the solution?
3.	Describe your maintenance and support offerings (e.g. pre-deployment, post-deployment, consulting, after-hours support, 7/24 on-call support) and how you provide them. Frequency of update releases, availability of solution, response time to repair.
4.	What are the activities and the type/level of expertise CRA would require in order to maintain the solution on an on-going basis? (E.g. administrator)

Appendix B – Technical Questions

B. 1 – APM Metrics & Limitations	
1.	List and describe the built-in APM metrics that the solution captures?
2.	Can your solution import data from other sources (structured and unstructured)?
3.	Does the software solution allow the addition and management of custom metrics? Describe how this is done.
4.	List and describe any limitations of the software solution. (E.g. total volume capacity, number of metrics items that can be created/managed)
5.	What mechanisms does the software use to capture metrics (network tap/sniffers, java script injection, agents, etc.) and how it is calculated? To what depth are application metrics made available (e.g. Java method invocation) for viewing?
B. 2 – Distributed/Mainframe integration	

1.	On which platform(s) and O/S(s) is the software solution capable of executing, for the purpose of automatically capturing APM information? Describe how this is done.
2.	What APM repositories (proprietary or open source) can your software solution interact with (e.g., automatically import and/or extract APM information). Describe how this is done.
3.	List software and/or repositories (proprietary or open source) your software solution can interact with and how it interacts.
4.	Describe how your software delivers an end-to-end perspective of a business transaction for a transaction that crosses over from the distributed platform to the mainframe platform and back. This should be discussed from both tracing and metric perspectives.
5.	Describe all other ways APM data can be imported to and exported from the software solution (Excel, CSV, XML, etc.).
6.	Does the software solution allow programmatic access (e.g., an Application Programming Interface - API) to the APM information managed by the software solution? Describe how this is done.
7.	Describe how the software solution consolidates APM data from the various sources?
B. 3 - Manage APM	
1.	Does the software solution have customizable role based access to the APM functionality and the management of APM information? Describe how this is done.
2.	Does the software solution provide a security management interface that allows authorization and access control to APM information within the APM repository? Describe how this is done.
3.	Does the software solution provide audit features that track changes made to the APM items? Describe how this is done.
4.	Does the software solution provide versioning of APM items (e.g. tailored metrics, reports, etc.)? Describe how this is done.
5.	Does the software solution allow for customizable standards to be applied to APM items? (E.g. standard abbreviations, controlled vocabularies, naming standards, taxonomies) Describe how this is done.
6.	Which control activities (e.g., archiving, backup/recovery, configuration modifications, versioning, etc.) can you implement in order to manage the APM repository?
B. 4 - Distribute and deliver APM data	
1.	Describe all ways the software solution can be used to access APM data. This description should be in relation to attributing, grouping, viewing and exporting APM data out of the software solution.
2.	Describe how the software solution can distribute APM information to business and technical analysts who may not have access to the software solution (e.g. automatically scheduled reports formatted in Adobe's Portable File Document (PDF) format)
3.	Can the APM information be viewed through third party software? Describe how this is done.
B. 5 – End-user path analysis	
1.	List and describe the features supporting end-user path analysis.
2.	List and describe the built-in user path metrics (e.g. page load time, response time, bounce point, entry point, etc.) and user session information that the solution captures/aggregates.
3.	Describe how this information is presented for viewing (e.g. interactive GUI or static reports) and how does this portion of the solution integrate with the other aspects of the solution.
4.	How does the software capture end-user path information (network tap/sniffing, java script injection, etc.)?
5.	List and describe any limitations of this portion of the solution.
B. 6 - Query, report and analyze APM data	
1.	Does the software solution provide a search feature that searches all APM data within the APM repository? Describe how this is done.
2.	Does the software solution provide analysis and trending features? Describe how this is done.
3.	Does the software solution allow for quality assessment of the APM data? Describe how this is done.
4.	Does the software solution provide reporting capabilities and customization? Describe how this is done.

B. 7 – Log analytics	
1.	List and describe the features supporting log analytics?
2.	Describe how this information is presented for viewing and how does this portion of the solution integrate with the other aspects of the solution?
3.	Does this solution support and integrate both mainframe and distributed logs? Application logs?
4.	How does the solution correlate unstructured data with performance events?
5.	List and describe any limitations of this portion of the solution.

INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION SESSIONS:

CRA may at its sole discretion request meetings with interested respondents who have clearly addressed the Solution Requirements in their response to CRA to provide them with the opportunity for a follow-up to their written response and to present /discuss their capabilities in relation to this RFI.

Respondents may be contacted within 6 weeks of the RFI closing date to schedule the presentation. An Invite Agenda will be provided to the interested respondents. Specific questions or areas of interest to be covered during the session may also be provided and will be based on responses received.

The on-site presentation session will be located in the National Capital Region. The exact location and timeframe will be detailed in the Invite Agenda. However, at no time will the session exceed 2 hours in length. Respondents will also be asked to provide an electronic version of their presentation material after the presentation session.

The respondent sessions must cover specific details relevant to the key objectives stated within this RFI. As such, representatives attending the session must include Subject Matter Expert(s) in these areas in order to meaningfully respond to questions at the session.

RESPONSES AND ENQUIRIES:

Respondents are advised to clearly identify which portions of their response are proprietary. The confidentiality of each Vendor's response will be maintained. Due to the nature of an RFI activity, respondents must be aware that aspects (that have not been labelled confidential) of their responses may be used as a basis for any subsequent Request for Proposal (RFP), if and when the CRA decides to prepare for any future procurement initiative.

Information provided in response to this RFI will be divulged only to individuals authorized to participate in this RFI activity.

Responses to this RFI will not be used to pre-qualify or otherwise restrict participation in any future procurement process (e.g. an RFP). Responses will not be formally evaluated.

CRA will not reimburse any expenditure incurred in preparing responses and participating in the presentation sessions related to this RFI.

The vendor must provide a contact name, email address and telephone number when submitting their response.

In the event that a response is not sufficiently clear, CRA reserves the right to seek additional information at their sole discretion.

Respondents are requested to submit responses by Wednesday, April 18, 2018, 2 p.m. Daylight Saving Time. The review of responses will begin after the date and time mentioned above. Responses received after that date may not be reviewed.

Electronic submissions are preferred.

Vendors are requested to submit responses to this RFI using the following facsimile number, e-mail or delivery address:

Canada Revenue Agency
Contracting Division
IT Distributed Section
250 Albert, Room 8088
Ottawa, ON K1A 0L5
Attn:
Telephone No:
Facsimile No:
E-mail:

For delivery by hand or by courier, Monday to Friday 8:30am to 3:00pm, please contact Chris Zaremba to arrange a drop off time.

Only enquiries which clarify the questions asked or feedback requested may be answered with respect to this RFI.