



SHARED SERVICES CANADA (SSC)

Invitation to Qualify (ITQ) for Government of Canada Network Services (GCNS) Procurement Process

ITQ No.	R000076631	Date	February 1, 2021
Amendment No.	006	GETS Reference No.	PW-20-00939000

Issuing Office	Shared Services Canada 180 Kent Street, 13 th Floor Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0B6		
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Closing Date and Time	February 19, 2021 @ 02:00 PM		
Time Zone	Eastern Standard Time (EST)		

INVITATION TO QUALIFY AMENDMENT NO. 006

ITQ Amendment no. 006 is raised:

- 1) To identify key dates;
 - 2) To answer questions posed by the potential respondents; and
 - 3) To identify the P2P BPM No.: BPM012005.
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Milestone	Original Date	Revised Date
ITQ release date	December 21, 2020	completed
ITQ Briefing Session	January 8, 2021	completed
Pre-bid submission date	January 22, 2021 @ 11:59 PM (EST)	January 29, 2021 @ 11:59 PM (EST) (AMD#1) February 5, 2021 @ 11:59 PM (EST) (AMD#2)
Last day for Questions and Comments	January 26, 2021 @ 2:00 PM (EST)	February 2, 2021 @ 2:00 PM (EST) (AMD#2)
ITQ closing date and time	February 12, 2021 @ 2:00 PM (EST)	February 19, 2021 @ 2:00 PM (EST) (AMD#1)

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Question 22:

“May you please define Point of Presence in Annex B-Stream 1 Core Network Services, mandatory requirement 4? Does the PoP need to be on the Prime Contractor's backbone or is an existing partner local loop relationship sufficient to qualify as a presence?”

Even amongst the largest Canadian companies, very few Canadian organisations require more than 1 point of presence in provinces outside of Quebec and Ontario. The requirement of 2 PoPs in each of 6 or more provinces/territoires will strictly limit the number of potential respondents. May the requirement be changed to at least 2 PoP in Quebec and Ontario and at least 1 PoP in 4 other provinces?”

Answer 22:

A Point of Presence (PoP) is defined as a physical traffic aggregation / distribution hub for a telecommunications service provider that provides a core termination point for the Core Network Service.

Canada confirms that the Core Network Service must be implemented at a PoP located on the Prime Contractor's backbone.

Canada will not make the requested change.

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Question 23:

“The ITQ defines Core Network Service Supplier as “A Prime Contractor that provides one or more CNSs” It further defines Core Network Service as “A Managed Service for a Core Network”. It is our understanding that Stream 1 includes the network (bandwidth and the circuits) , management of the network and that Stream 1 will replace existing managed network contracts such as GCNET. Please confirm.”

Answer 23:

It is Canada’s intention that any resulting Contracts from this ITQ procurement process would be used to provide modernized, reliable, secure and cost effective network services that will align with SSC’s network strategies (please refer to answer 11 in Amendment 005) and to provide replacement services for expiring contracts, such as GCNet as they become due.

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Question 24:

“The ITQ defines the Software Defined Wide Area Network Service Supplier (SD-WAN SS) as the “A Prime Contractor that provides SD-WANs”. SDWANs are defined as “A specific application of network technology applied to WANs which can be dynamically and centrally controlled using software applications to set centralized policies which are used to direct network and application traffic flows. An SD-WAN is created through transport-agnostic logical network overlays which provide centralized network control and security and real-time traffic optimizing over all available network links. The SD-WAN includes but is not limited to: SD-WAN devices, controllers and orchestrator”.

Based on these definitions our understanding is the SD-WAN Service provider is accountable for the solution (hardware/software/services) that will be applied to the government core network and any necessary WAN/HSIA links are not part of the SDWAN requirement.”

Answer 24:

The SD WAN SS is responsible for the SD WAN Service. The requirements for the SD-WAN Service will be provided during the RRR phase.

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Question 25:

“The ITQ defines a Building Access Network Service as “A Managed Service for a BAN.” It further defines a BAN as “An Access Network and/or LAN Service”. To maximize the pool of potential Respondents, it is common in the industry to split Access Network and LAN Service into separate streams. In so doing, the pool of Respondents is not limited to access providers. Would SSC please consider splitting Access Network and LAN service to increase the number of Respondents and increase value for Canada?

To do so, can SSC please make the following changes:

1. In Section 1.8.3 delete “and/or LAN” from the definition of Building Access Network (VBAN).
2. Create an additional Annex J for “ITQ Reference Project Forms for Stream 6: Local Area Network Service” with an equivalent Mandatory Experience Requirement #1 (service desk/network operations center) and #2 (incident tickets, change tickets, etc.).
3. Move Mandatory Experience Requirement #5 and #6 from Annex C to the new Annex J: Local Area Network Service; and
4. In Section 6.6 Basis for Qualification, add a Section 6.6.6 Stream 6: Local Area Network Service Supplier. For greater clarity, we have also provided the attached document to demonstrate what the revised Annexes C and J could look like with the changes described in point 2 and 3 above.”



Answer 25:

Canada will not make the requested changes.

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Question 26:

The ITQ defines Optical Network Services Suppliers as “A Prime Contractor that provides Optical Network Services.” It also defines ONS as “A Managed Service for an Optical Network”. It is our understanding that Stream 4 includes the Optical Network and the Management of the optical network. Please confirm.

Answer 26:

Stream 4 includes the management of Optical Network Services, as defined in the term Managed Service for any contracts that may result from this ITQ procurement process for Optical Network Services.

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Question 27:

“Section 4.6.5 h iii) states that references will be accepted as demonstrating that “all or substantially all of a specific business unit that was responsible within the corporate predecessor for the work connected with the experience requirement has been transferred to the Respondent, along with all or substantially all the employees of that business unit, and the Respondent continues to carry on essentially the same business as that business unit.”

Given the term of contract is unlimited and given the impact of COVID19 and general trends in the market there is likely to be restructuring over the coming years. Our assumption is as follows.

In the event that a Respondent qualifies for the ITQ or is awarded a resulting contract following the RFP and "all or substantially all of a specific business unit that was responsible within the corporate predecessor for the work connected with the experience requirement has been transferred to or spun off as a separate entity along with all or substantially all the employees of that business unit, and the Respondent continues to carry on essentially the same business as that business unit" Then SSC will allow that respondent to continue with the remainder of the procurement process, or to deliver services under an awarded SO or SA holders as a new corporate entity provided it satisfies all other security and financial requirements and subject to approval by SSC. Please confirm.”

Answer 27:

Canada does not issue contracts with unlimited terms, please refer to article 1.6.4 of the ITQ regarding the term for any subsequent SO or SAs.

As stated in the ITQ, Canada will only consider Reference Projects from the respondents themselves. Section 4.6.5 h iii) details a condition under which the experience of a corporate predecessor might be evaluated as experience of the Respondent in the case of a past transfer of a business unit and its employees to the respondent.

Canada does not confirm that a respondent can continue with the remainder of the procurement process, or to deliver services under an awarded SO or SA holders as a new corporate entity . Please refer to article 4.7 in the ITQ.

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Question 28:

“Many organizations create a corporate structure to align with geographic territories, to address local security requirements, and for tax purposes. Nonetheless, these entities share common tools, best practices, procedures, and centres of excellence. It is common in the industry that organizations evaluating corporate capability (including previous SSC procurements) assess the knowledge, capability and competence of the broad corporate structure which would include parent companies and affiliates to maximize the chance of getting the greatest value for Canada.

Given SSC has opened the door to use NOC located in both Canada and the US we request that references be allowed from the prime vendor and its parent companies and North American affiliates. That arrangement would allow SSC to assess the Respondents’ relevant capabilities that they could leverage in the delivery of this engagement.”

Answer 28:

Canada will not make the requested change.

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Question 29:

“We’ve made several requests since December 21 2020 to have it moved from Buy and Sell to the P2P site but it still does not appear under “My Solicitations” Tab.

I’m concerned that we may be missing updates or Q&As that will impact our response. In addition, both the Pre-Bid Compliance Check Process deadline and the Q&A deadline are fast approaching (January 22nd and January 26th respectively).

Question: Would you be able to confirm when the solicitation will be moved onto P2P and whether there are any Amendments or Q&A’s either published or pending?”

Answer 29:

The GCNS ITQ has been posted on P2P and assigned BPM No. BPM012005. As per the instructions in the ITQ, all Questions and Answers, as well as reference documents associated with this ITQ have been, and will continue to be, posted on the Buy & Sell web site. Amendments 001 through 005 have all been posted to date along with the relevant attachments. This will continue to be the case until ITQ closing.

The P2P site should only be used to submit the respondents’ final responses to the ITQ before the ITQ closing date and time. Any questions as well as pre-bid submissions should continue to be sent to ssc.gc-network-services-gc-services-reseautiques.spc@canada.ca as stipulated in the ITQ.

Please refer to Page 1 of this Amendment for the current key dates associated with this ITQ.

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GCNS-ITQ-30:

“The ITQ is asking for the name of references and individuals at the client location. Many of our clients receive several requests monthly and have asked us to control the demand. In the past SSC has allowed respondent to name the client and the client contact but to use the respondent to be the point of contact to arrange the touch point with the client. While we recognize any email or phone call will only be between SSC and the client is it acceptable for the respondent to be the point of contact for the named client resource.”



Answer 30:

It is not acceptable for the respondent to be the project reference or to act as the point of contact to reach the project reference.

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Question 31:

“At what frequency will SSC be re-evaluating vendor qualification through this format? For example, if a vendor chooses not to submit a response for one stream, in how many years will we have the opportunity to qualify again?”

Answer 31:

An ITQ is a qualification process that does not have a refresh period as is often the case with Supply Arrangements (SAs) and Standing Offers (SOs). Once suppliers are qualified for an ITQ, there are no further qualification periods for that ITQ. Should Canada establish a SA and / or SO for a stream, Canada may at its discretion refresh the suppliers for that SA and / or SO.

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GCNS-ITQ-32:

“Annex A: Security Clearance Level of Respondent

Has it been determined which level of security clearance will be required to respond to future RFPs, or standing offers, for qualified vendors?”

Answer 32:

A Draft SRCL may be provided for each Stream during the RRR phase. An SRCL will be provided in any subsequent solicitations.

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ALL OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS REMAIN THE SAME.

