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SHARED SERVICES CANADA

Request for Robotic Process Automation Enterprise Solution for Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)

Solicitation No.	2BS-1-78150/A	Date	2021-06-25
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Closing Date and Time	July 14 , 2021 at 14:00	
Time Zone	Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)	
Destination of Goods/Services	22 Eddy, Gatineau QC, K1A 0J9	
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This Solicitation Amendment 003 is raised to:

1. To answer questions from Industry.

<p>Question 1: Please consider granting an extension of 2 weeks (14 working days leading up to end of a quarter) for our complete submission & time to evaluate requirements, provide best available solutioning & pricing, with enough time to pose questions.</p> <p>Answer 1: The closing date has been extended.</p>
<p>Question 2: Is Federal Security clearance a mandatory requirement / qualification criterion to be able to respond to this RFP? Or can this be obtained on award?</p> <p>Answer 2: There are no security requirements for this RFP.</p>
<p>Question 3: If security clearance is required, what level of clearance/s is required for our organization and employees for this RFP – Enhanced Reliability, Secrets etc.?</p> <p>Answer 3: There are no security requirements for this RFP.</p>
<p>Question 4: If clearance is necessary, can we be sponsored by Shared Services Canada / ESDC to get security cleared at the appropriate level as quickly as possible?</p> <p>Answer 4: There are no security requirements for this RFP.</p>
<p>Question 5: Support services are critical to the success of any enterprise automation program. Does the Crown require enhanced support from the solution vendor (24x7 support, accelerated SLAs and dedicated access to the vendor's automation experts for business and IT support)? Will the Crown consider a requirement for consulting services to support implementation, configuration, development deployment, change management and advisory services as part of this RFP?</p> <p>Answer 5: We are looking at basic support at this time for the products that are in scope.</p>
<p>Question 6: Will the Crown update the weightings for technical (mandatory and rated criteria) and pricing to be equal at 50% each?</p> <p>Answer 6: No, the weighting will remain 60/40.</p>

Question 7:

Annex A – Statement of Work – 2.1.1 – Mandatory Requirements – subsection c) vi) references the solution must have “Workflow Management system: Access controls and permission, customizable dashboards, form management, workflow configuration, business process automation, task management, however this is not a mandatory requirement in Annex C – Evaluation Criteria. Will the Crown add this a mandatory requirement to Annex C?

Answer 7:

Yes, this has been added as another Mandatory Criteria as per Amendment (see M28)

Question 8:

Annex A – Statement of Work – 2.1.1 – Mandatory Requirements – subsection Subsection x) – execute automated processes over cloud-based services like Microsoft’s Azure DevOps. From a CI/CD pipeline perspective, what platforms or code repositories must the platform integrate with (i.e. GIT / SVN, etc.)?

Answer 8:

At this time, we are leveraging GIT as our code repository, This information has been added to *Annex A – Statement of Work*.

Question 9:

In Annex A – Statement of Work – Section 2 – Requirements, subsection 2.1 – Business Requirements – Tasks, Activities, and Deliverables - there is reference to on-premise or cloud virtual machines. Section 2.1.1 – Mandatory Requirements subsection b) states the RPA solution must “operate on an enterprise-class infrastructure using physical and virtual machines (VMs). Must the solution be deployable on ESDC’s existing enterprise infrastructure (on-premise) and in Protected B cloud environments as a requirement for the enterprise RPA solution?

Answer 9:

An ESDC Protected B cloud environment is the final state of where the solution should reside and be hosted.

Question 10:

Annex C – Evaluation Criteria

Requirement M2.3 – Attended and unattended bot functions - and Appendix A – Statement of Work (page 3). Appendix A defines attended RPA bots as taking cues from humans to boost productivity, while unattended RPA bots are designed to automate processes without human interactions. User experience and attended automation design is critical to successful adoption. To this point, are there specific capabilities the Crown requires to maximize the impact of attended automations? Such features may include the use of background processes, triggers, picture-in-picture (user can use their workstation while an automation is running), robot tray (select desktop automations to access / manage / run from the desktop) and dynamic forms for long running workflows and end-user input (including human in-the-loop processes).

Answer 10:

We are looking at any features that can be used to maximize our automation efforts to serve Canadians and agents with Attended and Unattended Robot automation.

Question 11:

Annex C – Evaluation Criteria

Requirement M3 – The Contractor must provide a complete list of all components and version numbers included in their solution and must include: a) an Enterprise Optical character recognition (OCR) engine. RPA vendors offer free open source products with 3rd party integrations in addition to commercially developed and supported solutions that are more robust and easier to use. Can the Crown please specify the OCR requirement in more detail in terms of document types (PDF forms, images, etc.), content (structured text, handwritten), functional requirements (useability, visual validation, extraction methods – standard extraction, machine learning) and annual page volumes? Will the Crown add a line item to the pricing table to account for licensed product costs (if applicable)?

Answer 11:

The OCR requirements would include images (JPG, GIF, BMP, PNG, etc...) and the document types would include digital forms and handwritten forms(PDF/images).

Question 12:

Annex C – Evaluation Criteria

Requirement M19 – Compatibility – will the Crown please specify the versions of SAP that the RPA solution must support? Will the Crown please specify the mainframe platforms that the RPA solution must integrate with?

Answer 12:

Here are the SAP versions that ESDC is using:

SAP ECC 6.0 EHP 8

SAP Netweaver 7.5

SAP BW 7.5

SAP Portal 7.5

SAP BOBJ 7.2 / 7.3

Lumira 2.3 / 2.4

SAP Business client 6.5 / 7.0

ESDC does not require any mainframe integration with the RPA solution. The RPA solution will only use SAP user interfaces listed above.

Question 13:

Annex C – Evaluation Criteria

Requirement M25 – sub-category c) business process evaluation and creation of inventories. Does the Crown require the RPA software solution to enable business users to easily submit candidate business processes that are automatically scored and documented for the CoE?

Answer 13:

M25 sub-category c) will be removed from the Annex C and the Scope of work in the RFP.

Question 14:

Annex C – Evaluation Criteria

M25 - sub-category f) Can the Crown please expand on its testing strategy requirement? Is the Crown looking for business guidance on a testing plan or the ability to develop, manage, schedule and deploy integrated RPA and application testing processes that integrates with existing testing platforms and code repositories?

Answer 14:

The vendor shall provide a Testing Strategy on how they intend to test the RPA solution when it has been implemented and we are not seeking business guidance on a testing plan.

Question 15:

Annex B – Basis of Payment

Will the Crown please confirm if all licensed products in Annex B – Basis of Payment - requires production and non-production licenses? If yes, how many non-production environments are to be licensed for each product?

Answer 15:

Numbers in Appendix B include our full needs for development, staging and production environments. For the robot licences less than 1% of the licences would not be leveraged for production.

Question 16:

Annex B – Basis of Payment

Unlimited licenses – Controller program / software repository that can operate in a multi-node configuration.

- i. Please confirm if a high availability multi-node configuration is to provide redundancy and stability for the RPA software solution and not only hardware or infrastructure redundancy.
- ii. Does the Crown require an active / passive or active / active deployment?

Answer 16:

Here are the answers to your questions.

- i) ESDC requires RPA to have a high availability multi-node configuration in order to offer redundancy of both the application and infrastructure level. ESDC/the Crown will be responsible for the infrastructure.
- ii) At this time, we are looking for active/passive deployment.

Question 17:

Annex B – Basis of Payment

Developer licenses - there are several developer personas in the spectrum of automation development.

- i. Are the 50 developer licenses to be tailored to citizen developers (a non-technical user who creates simple automations for themselves that their teams), RPA developers (create automations that are distributed throughout the organization), or test automation developers (designs, manages, executes RPA and application tests) or are these developer licenses to satisfy all developer personas?

Answer 17:

At this point we are looking at RPA developers. Personas and citizen developers are not in scope for this RFP submission.

Question 18:

Annex B – Basis of Payment

Process Mining

- i. Does the Crown require the Process Mining solution to be developed and supported by the RPA vendor directly?
- ii. Does the Crown require seamless promotion of candidate automations to the RPA environment (controller program) where developers can view, edit and deploy the automation?

Answer 18:

- i) No, the Process Mining solution does not need to be developed and supported by the RPA vendor directly, however support would still be included for the Process Mining product as a part of the yearly fees.
- ii) For process mining, we are looking for candidates for automation and not seamless promotion.

Question 19:

Annex B – Basis of Payment

Statistics and reporting solution

- i. Does the Crown require the reporting and statistics solution to be developed and supported by the RPA software vendor directly?
- ii. Does the Crown require a pre-built data model with out of the box reports, alerts, KPI's and visualizations as part of the statistics and reporting module for RPA?

Answer 19:

The reporting and statistics functions of your solution must be integrated into your RPA solution. Furthermore, as a part of the yearly fees for your RPA solution, we expect to get the support to operate and maintain these reporting and statistics functions. The Crown is not looking into out of the box reports.

<p>Question 20: Is this solicitation open to Software Resellers?</p> <p>Answer 20: Yes, the solicitation is open to Resellers.</p>
<p>Question 21: Can a Software Reseller submit multiple bids for different RPA Solutions?</p> <p>Answer 21: No, only one bid per reseller will be accepted.</p>
<p>Question 22: Regarding Section 3.6 (c) Implementation Plan (Mandatory at Solicitation Closing): The Bidder must include a proposed implementation plan, which demonstrates that the Bidder's proposed implementation plan meets all the mandatory requirements for implementation described in the Statement of Work. What is this implementation plan referring to? Is this required before the POC or is it a deliverable that is to be created during the POC?</p> <p>Answer 22: The implementation plan is a deliverable that is to be created during the proof of concept (PoC). M25 has been removed from <i>Annex C – Evaluation Criteria</i> since they only refer to PoC.</p>
<p>Question 23: Please confirm that the RFP is focused on evaluating and selecting an RPA software platform than meets the Crown's needs. Services around training and proof-of-concept development will be focused on evaluating various RPA products, and do not pertain to System Implementation services. Our understanding is System Implementation services would be procured separately post selection an enterprise RPA tool.</p> <p>Answer 23: The scope of this RFP is focused on evaluating and selecting an RPA software solution to meet the Crown's needs. The System Implementation beyond the use of a sandbox for the proof of concept is not required.</p>
<p>Question 24: Given the complexity of the RFP and the fact that SSC has recently released another complex solicitation for an RPA solution (i.e. Challenge-Based Standing Offer Solicitation, we respectfully request a three (3) week extension to the deadline to respond to the RFP. Will the Crown afford potential vendors the additional time necessary to respond effectively to the RFP by extending the deadline for response submissions?</p> <p>Answer 24: The closing date has been extended.</p>
<p>Question 25: In Annex B, the Crown has incorporated very specific quantities and types of license components to satisfy what is requested in Annex A - Statement of Requirement. However, it is unclear from what basis the Crown has constructed the Annex B types and quantities of license components to meet these requirements. Given that RPA platform vendors use very different license pricing methodologies for their platforms, will the Crown accept alternative pricing frameworks (including different mix of license component types and quantities) that equally satisfy all of the requirements in Annex A, while generating lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and higher Return On Investment (ROI) for ESDC, particularly at the enterprise level?</p> <p>Answer 25: For the Financial Evaluation, Canada must evaluate bidders in a comparable manner. To address this, ESDC attempted to be as generic as possible when building Annex B while requiring Bidders to meet requirements of Annex A. Bidders can provide more specific concerns with Annex B for Canada's consideration.</p>

Question 26:

The industry standard has been for customers to engage with one or more approved Resellers / certified Delivery Partners to acquire and implement their RPA platforms, particularly when considering large and complex rollouts of RPA technology across the "enterprise" and at scale . Can ESDC/SSC be more specific on the type of vendor they are seeking to contract with under this RFP – i.e. contract directly (and exclusively) with the Original Software Manufacturer (OSM) of the RPA Solution, or with an approved Reseller / certified Delivery partner from which to acquire all of the RPA software licenses and implementation services outlined in the RFP documents?

Answer 26:

Based on previously submitted inquiries, this RFP is open to OSM and resellers.

Question 27:

As part of the Evaluation Criteria in Annex C, the Crown is requesting that vendors provide a detailed "written RPA strategic enterprise implementation plan" to satisfy a Mandatory criterion (M26) while the elements of the same plan are to be provided in specific detail to satisfy several Rated Criteria (R1.1 to R1.11) for the vendor's proposed RPA Solution. However, in the Statement of Work (Annex A), the only references to "implementation" appear to be in relation to the Proof of Concept in Section 2.6. Can the Crown confirm that the scope of the written "RPA strategic enterprise implementation plan" responses required in Annex C (mandatory and rated criteria) should only cover the delivery of the Proof of Concept described in Annex A and Annex E of the RFP?

Answer 27:

M25 and its point rated evaluated criteria will be removed from the initial submission and will not be required for this closing.

Question 28:

There are several references to "implementation" in the RFP and Annexes, however Annex B - Basis of Payment only includes pricing of the RPA software platform. Can the Crown confirm that this RFP is seeking to contract with a vendor for the acquisition of both the RPA platform (i.e. software licenses and product support) and the implementation services that are necessary to deploy / implement the enterprise RPA Solution at ESDC?

Answer 28:

ESDC is seeking a contract with a vendor for the acquisition of software licences and product support and implementation plan to determine how best to implement the purchased services.

Question 29:

According to Section M25 in Annex C, there are several requirements involving implementation. Does this mean that ESDC is looking to use the awarded Contractor's Professional Services group, or leverage already-selected Professional Services supplier(s) to fully implement the RPA Solution across the ESDC enterprise?

Answer 29:

ESDC is not seeking to use the awarded contractors professional services group in this RFP. The implementation plan that ESDC is seeking is to determine how best to implement the purchased services.

Question 30:

In Annex E - Proof of Concept, Section 3 A-2 (Additional Information About Deliverables / Documentation / Full Implementation of RPA Solution Plan) requires the contractor to "Develop a project plan and risk analysis for full implementation of the RPA solution at the enterprise level with consideration given to the existing automated processes already in production in all ESDC business lines" and that the project plan "must be updated weekly in order to ensure proper project management guidelines are in place and be available to Canada." Given that there does not appear to be an implementation services component associated with this RFP (per the pricing template in Annex B – Basis of Payment), how does ESDC intend to procure the implementation services of the RPA Solution to roll it out across the ESDC enterprise?

<p>Answer 30: ESDC is seeking an implementation plan to determine how best to implement the purchased services.</p>
<p>Question 31: In the wording in Section R5 of Annex C, there is a direct call-out to SQL Server and Oracle. Are these the preferred databases for use within the RPA Solution and/or for the accessing of data?</p> <p>Answer 31: ESDC supports two database standards SQL Server or Oracle which is why they are included as evaluated criteria for <u>data storage</u> of RPA. The RPA solution can also <u>access</u> other types of databases (ex: DB2, DMS2) that exist in ESDC.</p>
<p>Question 32: We are interested in putting forward a proposal for this engagement. In the spirit of ensuring that a quality proposal is put forward and given the number of similar RFPs currently on the market, would Shared services Canada be willing to accommodate an extension of the submission deadline of two weeks?</p> <p>Answer 32: The closing date has been extended.</p>
<p>Question 33: Can you define the term "Robot" used in Table A, Annex B. Is the term referring to the number of agents running the scripts or number of the scripts to be executed?</p> <p>Answer 33: The term robot refers to the number of agents running the scripts and not the number of scripts being executed.</p>
<p>Question 34: What would be the concurrency ratios for unattended and attended robots in a given hour? In other words, out of the X agents, how many will be executing a script concurrently at any point in time for unattended and attended bots?</p> <p>Answer 34: There is a possibility that all unattended and attended robots requested in the RFP could be in play in a given hour executing automation. For the unattended robots, automation execution is continuous and when the unattended robots are in execution all of them will contribute to the execution. For attended robots execution is controlled by the client and it is difficult to obtain statistics on the executions in order to provide the ratio that you are requesting. Both automations (attended and unattended) do execute at the same time during day and at night it would be more unattended robot automation that would be executed.</p>
<p>Question 35: Would it be possible to provide the PDDs in advance so we can accurately estimate and prepare an appropriate project plan.</p> <p>Answer 35: The PDD(s) will be made available to the top ranked responsive bid for the Proof of Concept evaluation (should it be required).</p>
<p>Question 36: Due to the complexity of the requirements, we would like to request for an extension. Could Canada please extend the closing date to July 28th?</p> <p>Answer 36: The closing date has been extended.</p>
<p>Question 37: R8 Contractor Experience - The Government of Canada is endeavouring to create contract vehicles for RPA while acknowledging that there is limited experience in the federal government. The experience with RPA technologies is largely found in the OEM companies given that RPA is an emerging technology. As such, would Canada consider expanding the definition of Contractor to include the OEM with whom a bidder</p>

is partnered and thus allow the bidder to use the track record of the OEM to meet the mandatory and rated requirements?

Answer 37:

Yes, the Crown accept the bidder to demonstrate any previous implementation of their solution (R8) with the participations of any other partners.

Question 38:

Request for Extension - The SSC-ESDC RPA RFP is a complex, multi-phased activity. There is a concurrent RPA Challenge that has been issued by SSC and all of this comes at a time when key staff will be off due to COVID, stat vacations or holidays. As such, we hereby request an extension of three weeks to the pre-bid and final bid deadlines.

Answer 38:

The closing date has been extended.

Question 39:

Professional Services - It is our view that this requirement has a substantial component of professional services. However, the Basis of Payment does not provide for Professional Services. We would recommend that SSC-ESDC revise the Basis of Payment to include such a component.

Answer 39:

This RFP is limited to the procurement of an Enterprise wide RPA solution (software) for ESDC. No professional services are required other than the one the provider will have to perform during the Proof of Concept stage.

Question 40:

Volumetrics - It is difficult to ascertain what volumetrics have been used by SSC-ESDC in the determination of the requirements specified in the RFP. Would Canada please disclose the basis for its determination of the number of robots and other elements of the requirement specified in the RFP?

Answer 40:

ESDC is looking into an Enterprise wide RPA solution with a minimal size of what is described in Appendix B – Basis of Payment, Table I, Item #1.

Question 41:

Pricing Structure - There is a wide variety of pricing methodologies within the RPA technology platform industry. The pricing structure and terminology in Annex B (Basis of Payment) appear to be aligned to a specific RPA platform, as opposed to being amenable to the broad range of pricing methodologies available on the market today. Would the Crown allow vendors to propose, as their response to Annex B, alternative pricing proposals that equally satisfy all of the requirements specified in Annex A (Statement of Work) while providing higher ROI and lower TCO for ESDC with their investment in an enterprise RPA Solution?

Answer 41: For the Financial Evaluation, Canada must evaluate bidders in a comparable manner. To address this, ESDC attempted to be as generic as possible when building Annex B while requiring Bidders to meet requirements of Annex A. Bidders can provide more specific concerns with Annex B for Canada's consideration.

Question 42:

Proof of Concept – [RFP Solicitation; Section 4.5] – The Crown states that Canada will test the solution proposed in the top-ranked bid through proof of Concept (PoC), and the total duration of the PoC is approximated to be 8 weeks [Annex E; Section 2.1.1]

- a. Given that the top ranked bid is determined by the combination of 40% technical merit and 60% price [RFP Solicitation; Section 4.7.3], are bids projected to include the cost of implementation of the PoC?
- b. In what circumstances would the Crown exercise the right not to conduct a PoC [RFP Solicitation; Section 4.7.8]?

Answer 42:

- a. The cost of the PoC must be absorbed by vendors.

- b. Crown will exercise the right not to conduct a PoC if they judge that their trust in the proposed technology is strong enough ie if ESDC has successfully used the product in the past.

Question 43:

Implementation [Annex A; Section 2.6] – The Crown states the contractor’s responsibilities, calling out elements such as: development, testing, and implementation. In the details outlined in the Initial Contract [Annex B; Table A – Initial Contract] RPA Software Solution is listed, without the inclusion of contractor development, testing, and implementation.

- a. Are the details listed in Table A inclusive of the contractor’s responsibilities, excluding training [Annex B; Table C]?
- b. Are the maintenance and support items mentioned in Table A intended to reflect the RPA Software Solution Providers maintenance and support programs, in addition to the maintenance and support provided by the contractor?

Answer 43:

Annex A, section 2.6 describes contractor’s responsibilities and obligations during the Proof of Concept (PoC) stage. The PoC stage includes training to SSC/ESDC employee as described in item e) and f). In Annex B, Table C are the trainings that will be consume after the contract have been awarded.

Question 44:

Number of Bids [RFP Solicitation; Section 2] – The standard instructions, clauses, and conditions do not provide any guidance in relation to the number of bids an entity may submit. Additionally, SSC ESDC has communicated the contemplation of awarding one contract.

- a. Do RPA Software Solution Providers and contractors have the ability to submit multiple bids?
- b. If so, is there a limit to how many RPA Software Solution Providers that contractors are able to submit a bid with?

Answer 44:

No, only one bid per reseller will be accepted.

Question 45:

Closing Date and Time – The development of a comprehensive bid that is aligned with the expectations defined by SSC ESDC, including the collaboration between RPA Software Solution Providers and Contractors, may require additional time beyond the closing date and time of June 30, 2021 @ 14:00

- a. We are formally requesting a 4 week extension so that we have sufficient time to submit a quality compliant bid.
- b. Does the extension of bid submissions by 4-weeks, impact the Crown’s estimated project completion date (excluding the option to extend the contract)?

Answer 45:

The closing date has been extended.

ALL OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS REMAIN UNCHANGED.