



Procurement and Contracting Services
30 Victoria Street, Gatineau QC K1A 0M6

Supplier@elections.ca

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer File No.:

ECSM-RFI-2022-1301

Title:

Independent Ballot
Verification Solution for
Electors with Visual
Impairments

Date:

June 7, 2022

Closing Date and Time:

June 21, 2022

ENQUIRIES

Address enquiries to:

Supplier@elections.ca

Attention:

Stefania Menasce

Tel No.

873-416-1578

RESPONSES

Option 1 - email:
Submit responses to:

Supplier@elections.ca

Option 2 – by mail
Stefania Menasce
c/o Business Centre
30 Victoria Street
Gatineau QC K1A 0M6

This Request for Information (“RFI”) contains the following information:

- PART 1. Background and Purpose**
- PART 2. Nature of Request for Information**
- PART 3. Nature and Format of Responses Requested**
- PART 4. Response Costs**
- PART 5. Treatment of Responses**
- PART 6. Official Languages**
- PART 7. Information Requested by Elections Canada**
- PART 8. Format of Responses**
- PART 9. Enquiries**
- PART 10. Submission of Responses**

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Annex A – Questions to Industry

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Appendix B: Accepted Marks

Appendix C: Rejected Marks

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Independent Ballot Verification Solution for Electors with Visual Impairments

PART 1. Background and Purpose

1.1. Purpose

In order to assist Elections Canada (EC) in refining its requirements, EC is seeking feedback from suppliers regarding its requirement to develop or provide an existing mobile application that will allow electors with visual impairments to independently verify the mark on their ballot at polling locations and field offices.

1.2. EC Mandate

EC, headed by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), an agent of Parliament, is an independent, non-partisan agency with unique organizational features that reports directly to Parliament. EC exercises general direction and supervision over the conduct of election events such as general elections, by-elections and referendums at the federal level. Its mandate is to:

- a) be prepared to conduct a federal general election, by-election or referendum;
- b) administer the political financing provisions of the Canada Elections Act (CEA);
- c) monitor compliance with electoral legislation;
- d) conduct public information campaigns on voter registration, voting and becoming a candidate;
- e) conduct education programs for students on the electoral process;
- f) provide support to the independent commissions in charge of adjusting the boundaries of federal electoral districts following each decennial census;
- g) carry out studies on alternative voting methods and, with the approval of parliamentarians, test alternative voting processes for future use during electoral events; and
- h) provide assistance and cooperation in electoral matters to electoral agencies in other countries or to international organizations.

1.3. Overview

Elections Canada's current suite of service offerings available to electors generally works well for most. However, there remain barriers preventing electors who are blind or have visual impairments to vote and verify their ballot independently while maintaining the secrecy of the vote. Specifically, there currently exists no means for an elector with a visual impairment to independently verify the mark they make on a ballot during a federal electoral event.

To address this gap, Elections Canada wishes to consult and engage with the industry in exploring potential solutions that will allow these electors to independently verify the mark they make on a ballot using their personal mobile device. To be clear, Elections Canada is not seeking solutions that mark the ballot for the elector but that verify the mark. The solution should be compatible with all mobile devices, including iOS and android.

The purpose of this RFI is to obtain information on technology that would be suitable for implementing a solution for the barrier described above in a federal electoral context.

In Canada, there are currently 338 electoral districts or ridings across the country (possibly 343 at the conclusion of the *Federal Electoral Districts Redistribution 2022*). Each have differing numbers of candidates running during an election. The solution would first be piloted in a limited number of electoral districts during either by-elections or a general election occurring after April 1st 2023.

In a federal election, there are certain legislative requirements and procedures that must be taken into account when developing a solution. During the count, election officers use these legislative requirements and procedures to either accept or reject ballots based on specified criteria related to the mark on the ballot. Therefore, the solution would be expected to “behave” as closely as possible to an election officer when it interprets the mark on a ballot; that is, the solution should not reject a mark that would otherwise be accepted by a human, nor should it accept one that would be rejected. It should also ensure that multiple marks haven’t been made for multiple candidates. This type of guidance allows the elector to be aware of whether their ballot is properly marked or not and affords them the possibility of spoiling their ballot and requesting another one at the time of voting. The option of requesting a new ballot at the time of voting if your ballot is spoiled is offered to all electors.

In addition, there is a wide variety of cultural backgrounds in Canada, and there are two official languages, English and French. As such, the solution would have to be available in both official languages and potentially in indigenous languages. It must also be capable of processing political party names or affiliation and also candidate names of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds.

The elector’s choice must remain a secret. It cannot be saved in any application or database. Any communication with the elector needs to be done in a way that no one else can overhear or see the elector’s selection.

While reading through and answering the questions below, please keep these considerations in mind.

1.4. Design Phase

As and when requested, the Contractor must perform the following tasks:

Document critical dependencies and assist in the identification and management of both tactical and strategic risks;

Develop and/or enhance templates and guides related to the solution

Review and comment on critical documents related to the design and function of the solution including business requirements documents, business cases and other project artifacts prior to sign-off by clients and senior management.

Provide a demonstration of the solution

1.5. Implementation Phase

As and when requested, the Contractor must perform the following tasks:

Assist with demonstrations of the solution to user group

Assist with the coordination of user testing of the solution

Review and comment on training documentation related to the solution

Provide technical support during electoral event if required.

1.6. Anticipated Procurement Timeline

EC is at the preliminary stage of the procurement process. The high-level procurement timeline will follow a multi-phase procurement process that will likely include the following key activities:

- a) Within 10 Business Days of the Effective Date: kick-off meeting, review of EC-provided documentation.
- b) Early to Mid September 2022 – finalize solution requirements;
- c) Mid September to end of October 2022 – build prototype and coordinate testing with project team
- d) November 2022 – participate and assist with Legal and IT security assessment of solution
- e) November 2022 – conduct testing with user group
- f) December 2022 to January 2023– assist with development of field procedures
- g) January 2023 – ready to demonstrate finalized solution to parliament for approval to pilot
- h) April 1st, 2023 – ready to deploy date for pilot

PART 2. Nature of Request for Information

This is not a solicitation of bids or proposals. This RFI may not lead to the launching of a procurement process, the award of any contract or the creation of a source list. As a result, suppliers of any goods or services described in this RFI should not reserve stock or facilities, nor allocate resources, as a result of any information contained in this RFI. Therefore, whether or not any supplier responds to this RFI, it will not preclude that supplier from participating in any future procurement. Also, the decision to whether or not to launch a procurement process for any of the goods or services described in this RFI is entirely at the sole discretion of EC. EC reserves the right to cancel or modify any of the preliminary requirements described herein. This RFI is simply intended to solicit feedback from suppliers with respect to the matters described herein and should not be considered as an authorization to undertake any work that would result in costs being charged to EC. EC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all comments received. Further respondent engagement may be conducted by EC which may include supplier engagement days, one-on-one meetings, product demonstrations, requesting additional information from respondents, etc.

PART 3. Nature and Format of Responses Requested

Respondents are invited to provide their comments, concerns and, where applicable, alternative recommendations regarding how the requirements or objectives described in this RFI could be satisfied. Respondents are also invited to provide comments regarding the content, format and/or organization of any draft documents included in this RFI. Respondents should explain any assumptions they make in their responses.

PART 4. Response Costs

EC will not reimburse any respondent for any expenses or costs incurred in responding to this RFI.

PART 5. Treatment of Responses

5.1. Use of Responses

Responses will not be formally evaluated. However, the responses received may be used by EC to develop or modify procurement strategies or any draft documents contained in this RFI. EC will review all responses received by the RFI closing date. EC may, in its discretion, review responses received after the RFI closing date.

5.2. Review Team

A review team composed of representatives from EC will review the responses. EC reserves the right to hire any independent consultant, or use any government resources that it considers

necessary to review any response. Not all members of the review team will necessarily review all responses.

5.3. Confidentiality

Respondents are solely responsible for marking any portions of their response that they consider proprietary or confidential. EC will handle the responses in accordance with the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*

5.4. Follow-Up Activity

EC may, at its discretion, contact any respondents to follow up with additional questions or for clarification of any aspect of a response or for one-on-one meetings.

PART 6. Official Languages

Responses to this RFI may be submitted in either of the official languages of Canada, French or English.

PART 7. Information Requested by Elections Canada

7.1. Responses to Questions to Suppliers

EC requests responses to the questions found in Annex A – Questions to Suppliers.

PART 8. Format of Responses

8.1. Cover Page

If the response includes multiple volumes, respondents should indicate on the front cover page of the response the title of the response, the RFI number, and the number of volumes and the full legal name of the respondent.

8.2. Title Page

The first page of each volume of the response should be the title page, which should contain:

- a) the title of the respondent's response and the volume number;
- b) the name and address of the respondent;
- c) the name, address, telephone number and email address of the respondent's contact;
- d) the date; and
- e) the RFI number.

8.3. Numbering System

Respondents should prepare their response using a numbering system corresponding to the one in this RFI. All references to descriptive material, technical manuals and brochures included as part of the response should be referenced accordingly.

PART 9. Enquiries

This is not a solicitation; therefore, EC will not necessarily respond to enquiries in writing or by circulating answers to all potential respondents. However, respondents with questions regarding this RFI may direct their enquiries to the Contracting Authority via the email address identified on the cover page of this document.

PART 10. Submission of Responses

10.1. Time and Place for Submission of Responses

Respondents interested in providing a response should submit it by email to the Contracting Authority via the email address and by the closing date and time identified on the cover page of this document.

10.2. Responsibility for Timely Delivery

Each respondent is solely responsible for ensuring its response is delivered on time to the correct location.

10.3. Identification of Response

Each respondent should ensure that its name, contact person and email address, the RFI number and the closing date are included in their response in a prominent location.

ANNEX A – QUESTIONS TO INDUSTRY

1. Identifying Questions

- 1.1 Please identify which industry association, advocacy group, assistive technology supplier group or any other third party you are responding on behalf of (if applicable).
- 1.2 Does your organization hold a valid security screening (DOS)?

2. Opening Questions

- 2.1 In terms of assistive technologies or assistive voting technologies, what are the trends in the industry that could be applied to the problem described above?
- 2.2 Do you have a smartphone product/solution that is used for independent verification of a marked ballot?
- a) If yes, what element(s) of your in-stock product/solution differ from the high-level requirements described above?
 - b) If not, would you have to develop a product/solution from scratch or do you have a product/solution that can be leveraged or customized for assistive voting purposes, including the independent verification of a marked ballot?
 - c) What kind of technology would you propose for the solution? How do you see the solution operating? How could such a solution work?
 - d) If possible, please provide a self-running demo as part of your RFI submission. Live demonstrations will not be scheduled due to time constraints.
 - e) Could this solution be offered in indigenous languages in addition to both official languages (English and French)?
- 2.3 Have you worked with any other government departments, Canadian or otherwise to provide an assistive product or service? If so, please specify which department and the service or product provided.
- 2.4 Do you foresee a problem with signing off on our General Terms and Conditions?
- 2.5 In terms of assistive technologies, where is the industry going from your perspective?

3. Probing Questions

3.1 Technical Requirements

- 3.1.1 What would some of the technical specifications of the solution be, in order to be deployed successfully in an election environment? (Ex: Operating system, Security, Internet connection, etc.)
- 3.1.2 What would be required to deploy the solution? (Hardware, Software, etc.)
- 3.1.3 How would an elector access the solution?
- 3.1.4 What are the limits of the technology in terms of recognizing different marks or characters?

3.2 IT Security Requirements

- 3.2.1 What are some of the IT security considerations that we should be aware of for the solution? Including but not limited to tampering, secrecy breach, data interception, data at rest and in transit, etc.
- 3.2.2 As the solution would only be required during an electoral event, how do you foresee application availability and updates being managed between elections?

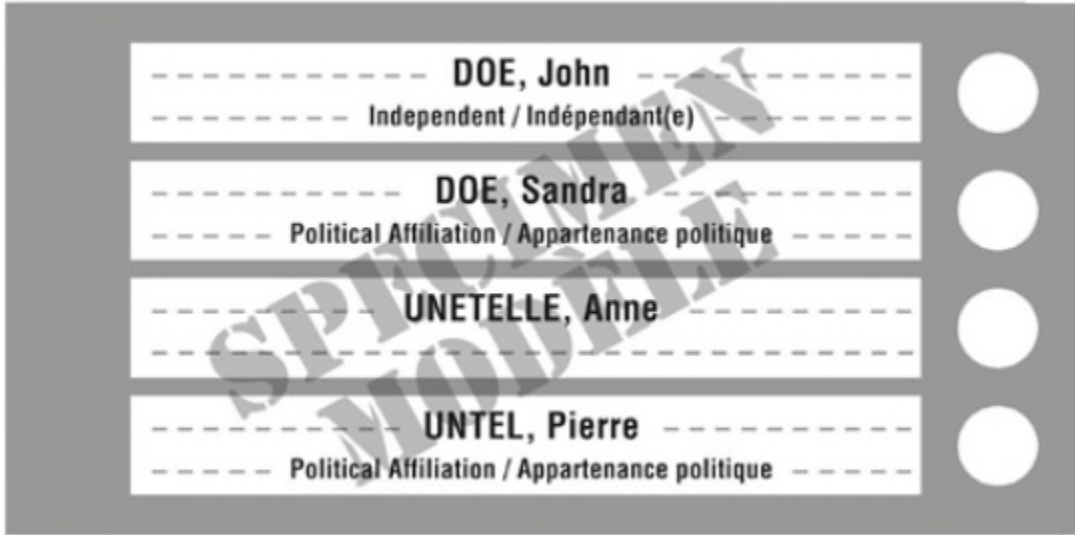
3.3 Usability and Accessibility Standards

- 3.3.1 Have you developed assistive technology for disability groups in the past?
- 3.3.2 How do you suggest we engage user communities to develop the solution?
- 3.3.3 How can the solution adapt to the two official languages (French and English) and the multicultural make-up of names found in Canada?
- 3.3.4 Do you adhere to the principals of universal design in the development of your products?
- 3.3.5 What accessibility standards do you adhere to or would you recommend? (Ex: WCAG 2.1, EN 301 549)
- 3.3.6 How do your products meet Canadian accessibility standards (including but not limited to web standards)?

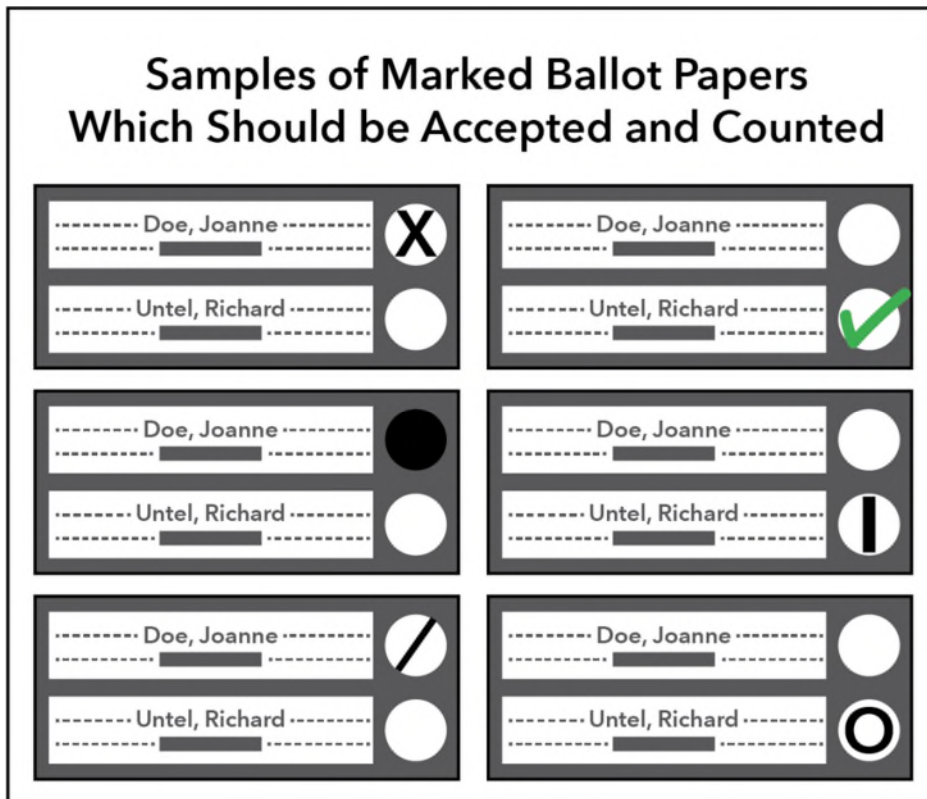
3.4 Solution Development, Deployment and Support

- 3.4.1 What challenges do you foresee in developing this solution?
- 3.4.2 How long would it take to develop a prototype of a solution?
- 3.4.3 How do you foresee rolling out and supporting the solution on a national scale?
- 3.4.4 Would licensing be required? How would product licensing work?
- 3.4.5 How are you remunerated for products (Ex: Lot fee for the platform? Per user? etc.)

Appendix A: Sample Regular Ballot Unmarked



Appendix B: Accepted Marks



Appendix C: Rejected Marks

