

ESDC CLOUD SERVICES LONG-TERM PROCUREMENT ITQ #001 - QUESTION & ANSWER

Question #	Question	Response
1	In 1.2 Overview of Project, in item (b) it states – “The exact procurement vehicle structure will be presented at the solicitation phase.”. Can you please clarify what is meant by this statement? Is the intention to use a procurement vehicle which is not the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement?	Canada will not be using the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement as part of this procurement process. SSC and ESDC intend to use the next phase of this procurement process, Review and Refine Requirements, to engage with qualified bidders to determine the appropriate construct of the resulting contracts to meet ESDC’s requirements. The FA terms and conditions will be leveraged to the extent that this makes sense to respective parties.
2	In section 2.2 Questions and Comments, item a) - “ITQ - All questions must be submitted by March 27, 2023, at 2 PM EDT.” Recognizing that vendors may have follow on questions based upon responses received to initial questions, will the Crown please extend this deadline by an additional 10 days?	The ITQ Closing has been extended as per Amendment #003.
3	Section 2.2 of the ITQ states: “Note that by the RFP stage, Respondents will be required to have a science-based target in line with Paris Agreement. This is in line Standard on the Disclosure of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Setting of Reduction Targets which is effective April 1st, 2023. Terms and conditions related to this will be included in the final resulting contract clauses for this procurement.” Please provide the proposed terms and conditions to be included in the resulting contract clauses as soon as possible. Proponents will need time to evaluate, discuss and adjust.	Canada will share a draft of the T&Cs with the qualified Respondents during the RRR phase.
4	Annex A- Mandatory Requirements – M1 – “The Respondent must identify itself as the Cloud Service Provider (CSP), whose Commercially Available Cloud Services will be offered to Canada by itself at the solicitation stage of this procurement process.” Why is this being requested? All of the CSP’s who have qualified for the SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement (FA) have already provided this information as part of the qualification for that contract/vehicle.	This procurement process is open to all potential suppliers and is a standalone procurement process. Therefore, all mandatory requirements must be completed. The anticipated resulting vehicle will not be part of the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement, therefore the Respondent (CSP) must provide the information as requested in the ITQ.
5	Annex A – Mandatory Requirements – M2 – Data Location – Will the Crown please confirm why this is this being requested? All the qualified FA CSP’s have already provided this information and demonstrated compliance to this requirement.	The anticipated resulting vehicle will not be part of the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement, therefore the Respondent (CSP) must provide the information as requested in the ITQ.
6	Annex A – Mandatory Requirements – M3 – Security Certifications – As a qualified CSP on the existing GC Cloud FA, we have already provided confirmation of our and participation in the CCCS CSP IT Assessment Program. Why is this being asked for again as it has already been provided?	This procurement process is open to all potential suppliers and is a standalone procurement process. Therefore, all mandatory requirements must be completed. The anticipated resulting vehicle will not be part of the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement, therefore the Respondent (CSP) must provide the information as requested in the ITQ. Canada has amended the mandatory requirement wording and compliance requirements for M3.
7	Annex A – Mandatory Requirements – M4 – PSPC Contract Security Program – In order to be a qualified CSP on the existing PBMM GC FA, this requirement needed to be demonstrated. What is the Crown looking for beyond what has already been provided as part of the qualification for the FA?	This procurement process is open to all potential suppliers and is a standalone procurement process. Therefore, all mandatory requirements must be completed. The anticipated resulting vehicle will not be part of the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement, therefore the Respondent (CSP) must provide the information as requested in the ITQ. Canada has amended the mandatory requirement wording and compliance requirements for M4
8	Annex A – Mandatory Requirement – M5 – Official Languages – In order to qualify for the existing FA, this was a mandatory requirement. Can you please clarify why this is being requested from qualified FA holders again?	The anticipated resulting vehicle will not be part of the current SSC PBMM Cloud Framework Agreement, therefore the Respondent (CSP) must provide the information as requested in the ITQ.
9	Annex A – Mandatory Requirement - Ability to deliver commercially available enterprise – scale public cloud services for large-scale citizen facing programs – Recognizing that the CSP’s who are currently on the FA and responding to this requirement have global reach and demonstrated capabilities, will the Crown consider publicly facing materials which demonstrate its ability to meet a similar types of availability, scalability and disaster recovery requirements for the ITQ phase?	Canada will consider point in time publicly facing materials that demonstrate the (CSP)’s ability to meet this requirement. However, though screen shots or similar materials are acceptable, as stated in the ITQ “external references to web pages will not be evaluated.” and should not be included in the bid response
10	Annex A – Mandatory Requirements – M6 – The volumetrics mentioned in this requirement to evaluate a CSP’s ability to deliver services at-scale appear to have been defined more using “User capacity metrics”. We request that Canada reconsider and rephrases this requirement to instead be focused on the actual result that ESDC is looking to achieve for the following reasons: The infrastructure capacity that is needed per-concurrent-user significantly varies based on the technology platform stack and the exact application architecture being accessed. For example, “1,000 concurrent developers” could require 128 CPUs of compute power when using Technology stack A ; whereas it might require just 16 CPUs when a different technology stack B is assumed. This leaves a lot of room for CSPs to make incorrect assumptions that are not actually representative of Canada/ESDC’s actual capacity needs. To demonstrate compliance, Canada asks that the CSP provide “system documentation or technical documentation or narrative description”. However, CSP documentation for IaaS/PaaS services in general tend to provide capacity information that are in terms of computing capacity (i.e., CPUs, Memory, Storage, IOPS, Throughput etc.). CSP documentation does not tend to have user volumetrics (i.e. number of total users, concurrent production users, developers etc.) as these could significantly vary based on the applications hosted within the provided IaaS/PaaS services. Computing capacity metrics as suggested above are hence more translatable for Canada, in order to compare CSP’s ability to deliver services at scale. Please consider rephrasing.	The Respondent must demonstrate their ability to deliver cloud services to large-scale citizen facing programs, similar in nature and size to those delivered by ESDC. For reference information about ESDC mandate/programmes can be found at https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate.html The volumetrics provided are not for infrastructure sizing purposes. They are meant to provide context and help the Respondent identify their best references based on the size of such programs in terms of external users (citizens accessing the service) and internal users (developers and production users). The required supporting documentation should demonstrate how infrastructure cloud services and supporting cloud services can be delivered by the Respondent to meet the requirements of such large-scale citizen facing programs. Availability, scalability, elasticity and disaster recovery are particular technical elements that support such programs. Client references must demonstrate the Cloud Service Provider’s ability to deliver cloud services to large-scale citizen facing programs, similar in nature and size to those delivered by ESDC. Please see amended requirement M6: The Cloud Service Provider of the proposed Commercially Available Cloud Service must demonstrate its ability to deliver infrastructure cloud services capable of meeting the requirements for large-scale citizen facing programs such as those delivered by ESDC as it relates to availability, scalability and disaster recovery capabilities. In its response, the Respondent must demonstrate its ability to support the following volumetric data: - Over 8,000,000 new participant applications per year (initial and renewal) - Over 90,000 participant applications per day (peak) - Over 200,000,000 participant payments per year
11	Please confirm that ESDC will maintain the confidentiality of the Respondent’s confidential information and that the Respondent’s confidential information will be used for the evaluation on of the Respondent’s response only, subject to applicable freedom of information law.	Canada treats all information provided by the Respondents in strict confidentiality and for the sole purpose of evaluating the compliance to the requirements.
12	M-3. Would ESDC accept the latest report from CCCS Assessment as evidence of enrolment through CCCS IT Assessment program.	Response to Q12: Please refer to Response in Question 6.

13	Question M6 requires Respondents to demonstrate that their cloud platform can support the workload of 1,000 concurrent developers. a) Please clarify whether GC require 1,000 developers to be able to access the same system workload at the same time or whether GC need them to access just the management plane at the same time. Additionally, b) please confirm that the references will be used to formally evaluate a cloud service provider's ability to deliver this requirement.	Response to Q13: Please refer to Response in Question 10.												
14	Question M7 requires Respondents to accommodate a surge in capacity up to 1,000% at any time. Would the GC please clarify what the base metric is for the surge? Does it relate to compute, traffic, or transactions, for example?	<p>Hyperscalers must be in a position to provide high capacity and high availability services that have the ability to rapidly shift based on demand. The types of demand would be based on service delivery needs and could include the ability to surge processing power to address batch processing needs, the ability to surge transactional services to support new programme uptake and the ability to surge network capacity to support short term large volume data transactions. Surge requirements will be based on cyclical programme needs and potential needs to adapt to Government policy changes.</p> <p>Respondents can expand on the narrative provided in M6 to demonstrate how their services, across multiple datacentres, can be leveraged by clients to handle shifts in demand up to 1000%.</p> <p>The volumetric provided is not for infrastructure sizing purposes, but to demonstrate the ability of the Respondent's public-cloud services to deliver similar large-scale citizen facing programs.</p>												
15	Workload thresholds are normally measured according to the total number of transactions/requests/sessions over time versus how many users the system will support. Cloud services are designed to scale and support a large number of concurrent users without performance degradation. Individual components have limits, but they can be scaled out to meet greater needs. For example, specific database services can offer up to a maximum size (via hyperscale) of 8000 concurrent requests and 30,000 concurrent sessions, analytics services can offer up to 1024 concurrent open sessions, 128 concurrent queries with workload management and prioritization. Would the GC consider modifying the metrics to align with concurrent transactions/request/sessions rather than user concurrency?	Response to Q15: Please refer to Response in Question 10.												
16	A 10-year term or greater is incompatible with Canada's decision to procure a public cloud solution. Agreeing to a 10-year term with customer-initiated option periods would require Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) to make bespoke commitments, including to maintain a commercial off the shelf product for one or more decades, notwithstanding that a CSP's product roadmap is typically limited to 3-5 year's and, by their nature, commercial cloud solutions undergo material changes over time. Because of this, it is critical that Canada reduce the length of the initial term to three or five years and make any option years or renewal subject to mutual agreement. Canada can reduce any related risks to its operations by including minimum user base requirements to the RFP, which will help to ensure that the Contractor will have strong business incentives to maintain current products or replace them with products that have similar functionality. Given that no CSP can commit to maintain products beyond its current product roadmap, a failure to make this change is likely to prevent CSPs from submitting a compliant response. Will the GC consider this feedback	The Respondent does not make any commitments on the duration of the agreement nor on the terms as a result of the ITQ phase. As per ITQ Section 1.3 b), the RRR Phase will provide an opportunity for the Qualified Respondents to provide feedback on Canada's requirements.												
17	<p>In Form 1 screenshot below - Is there an answer expected for this section?</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="219 961 669 1045"> <tr> <td>Applicable ITQ for the Response</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Respondent's proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Services</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CSP of the proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Services</td> </tr> </table>	Applicable ITQ for the Response	Respondent's proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Services	CSP of the proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Services	Please note that the Bidder is requested to complete Form 1 by bid closing, but as indicated in the ITQ, it is not mandatory. For "Applicable ITQ for the Response", please indicate ESDC#001									
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Respondent's proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Services														
CSP of the proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Services														
18	<p>What certificate is required here</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="219 1083 824 1304"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">INVITATION TO QUALIFY NO. ESDC#001 RESPONSE SUBMISSION FORM</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Respondent certifies having a combined work force in Canada of fewer than 100 permanent full-time, part-time and temporary employees.</td> <td style="text-align: center;">X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Respondent has a combined workforce in Canada of 100 or more permanent full-time, part-time and temporary employees.</td> <td style="text-align: center;">The Employment Equity (EE) number for Canada is 0001.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Valid and current Certificate number.</td> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Respondent certifies having submitted the Agreement to Implement Employment Equity (LAW 188) to ESDC-Labor.</td> <td style="text-align: center;">The Employment Equity (EE) number for Canada is 0001.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Requested language for future communications regarding this procurement process - <i>Please indicate either French or English</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;">English</td> </tr> </table>	INVITATION TO QUALIFY NO. ESDC#001 RESPONSE SUBMISSION FORM		The Respondent certifies having a combined work force in Canada of fewer than 100 permanent full-time, part-time and temporary employees.	X	The Respondent has a combined workforce in Canada of 100 or more permanent full-time, part-time and temporary employees.	The Employment Equity (EE) number for Canada is 0001.	Valid and current Certificate number.	↓	The Respondent certifies having submitted the Agreement to Implement Employment Equity (LAW 188) to ESDC-Labor.	The Employment Equity (EE) number for Canada is 0001.	Requested language for future communications regarding this procurement process - <i>Please indicate either French or English</i>	English	This relates to the ESDC-Labour Federal Contractors Program (FCP). The FCP applies to organizations that have a combined workforce in Canada of 100 or more permanent full-time or permanent part-time employees; and have received a federal government goods or services contract valued at \$1 million or more (including applicable taxes). The number requested is the Agreement to Implement Employment Equity (AIEE) number from the FCP Program.
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19	There is a stated limit of 5 pages and we cannot provide an external link. Should the List of services exceed 5 pages, is it acceptable to provide a "subset" of the services available ?	Yes it is acceptable, as long as these services demonstrate compliance to Requirements M1, M2, M5 as stated.												
20	Will we receive answers for all vendors questions?	Yes, questions and answers will be made available to all interested Respondents through publication on CanadaBuys.												
21	For the both references that are to be included in Appendix A in our response, will the Crown accept submission of only one contact from the organization assuming that they will be available within the requested timelines to answer the reference call/email?	<p>Yes a Respondent can submit only one contact per reference as long as the reference contact provided is available, otherwise, the client reference may be rejected and render the Respondent ITQ Submission non responsive.</p> <p>As requested at M6, the Cloud Service Provider of the proposed Commercially Available Cloud Service should provide the details for two client references. The client reference contact person, either primary or secondary, should be available during the two-week period following the submission of the respondent's Proposal to confirm the scope of services provided by the Respondent. The Respondent's client reference information provided should not exceed 5 pages for each of the references provided. Any pages exceeding the 5 pages limit or external references to web pages will not be evaluated.</p>												
22	Can you confirm (M1) , "will be offered to Canada by itself" implies that the CSP will offer the cloud services segregated to the Government of Canada only and as such multi-tenancy (with non GoC tenants) is not acceptable?	<p>The Respondent must be the Cloud Service Provider (CSP) of the proposed Commercially Available Public Cloud Service as defined in Annex B,</p> <p>The Respondent will have an opportunity, as per ITQ Section 1.3 b) during the RRR Phase for the Qualified Respondents to provide feedback on Canada's requirements.</p>												
23	In M3 it references that in order to qualify to continue in the assessment phase of this competitive procurement you must have participated in the CCCS CSP IT Assessment Program. Not all vendors had the ability to qualify at the time of the SSC Protected B Cloud Framework Agreement but have the capabilities. Other current Government of Canada open solicitations allow certifications at the time of contract award. To allow modern, secure, innovative and sustainable solutions to be proposed, would SSC please change this requirement to allow certification at the time of contract award?	Response to Q23: Please refer to Response in Question 6.												

24	<p>To support the volumetrics, the proposed Commercially Available Cloud Service must demonstrate its ability to support the workload of:</p> <p>a) a minimum of 1,000 concurrent developers b) a minimum of 20,000 concurrent ESDC production users c) a minimum of 100,000 concurrent citizens using the applications delivered through the cloud service.</p> <p>In order that we might demonstrate we meet M6 and provide 2 suitable references, can you please provide guidance on what would be deemed compliant. Without detailed technical diagrams and proof of the developed solution supporting the set up and implementation it would be difficult to prove compliance. Would SSC be able to provide volumetric details that are more supportable by our customer use cases i.e., number of VM's/containers required vs the # of developers, users and citizens?</p>	Response to Q24: Please refer to Response in Question 10.
25	<p>M7 indicated a requirement of a surge capacity of 1000%.</p> <p>a) Can you please share why ESDC would require a surge capacity of 1000% (10 times) and is 1000% an accurate requirement? b) Would this capacity M1 require that the surge capacity be offered to the Government of Canada only and does the Government of Canada have the ability to surge this quickly for it to be a mandatory requirement? c) Does the Crown expect that a surge capacity of 1000% is in a specific data centre or can it be across multiple specific data centres?</p>	Response to Q25: Please refer to Response in Question 14
26	Based on the size and scope of this requirement is the Crown making a minimum reserved commitment for services during the duration of the contract?	Canada would like to inform the Respondents that the Review and Refine Requirements (RRR) Phase will provide an opportunity for the Qualified Respondents to provide feedback on Canada's requirements.
27	Is the intent for the Crown to bring their own software licensing, leverage a marketplace or both?	Canada would like to inform the Respondents that the Review and Refine Requirements (RRR) Phase will provide an opportunity for the Qualified Respondents to provide feedback on Canada's requirements.
28	We are writing to you in relation to the ESDC ITQ #001. Would SSC and ESDC consider extending the closing date for this ITQ? We very interested in participating in this procurement; however, in order for us to complete our review and prepare a response a 4 week extension would be required. We have also identified a few questions that they would like to submit, and an extension would be required for us to do so given that questions had to be submitted by March 27, 2023.	The ITQ Closing has been extended as per Amendment #003.
29	We completed all the technical details of all the mandatory questions, though M6 was linked to the references which we are correlating so that we may provide the best and most relevant references for this solicitation. We believe that the pre-bid was just to go through the technical requirements and did not require the references until the final bid solicitation was submitted. Could you please confirm that is correct.	<p>If references are not provided at Pre-Bid Compliance Check closing, this will be noted as a deficiency. However, references will only be validated following the ITQ closing and will not be checked at the Pre-Bid Compliance Check stage.</p> <p>For clarity, the feedback provided during the Pre-Bid Compliance Check stage will not include feedback on the references provided.</p>
30	As we have not received any responses to our questions which are fundamental to our ITQ response, we are now in a position where we will not have enough time to finalize our response in order to submit before the deadline for pre-bid review. We would like to request an extension to the pre-bid review submission deadline and in turn the ITQ deadline so that we may have a reasonable amount of time to prepare our response once we have received answers to our questions.	The ITQ Closing has been extended as per Amendment #003.
31	With regard to ITQ ESDC#001 (Long-Term Cloud Services), I know that we are past the clarification period, however we wonder if we might ask clarification around the references requirement. Q1: Do the references provided in Appendix A have to meet the listed volumetrics listed in M6 a to c? Namely, a minimum of 1,000 concurrent developers, a minimum of 20,000 concurrent production users, and a minimum of 100,000 concurrent citizens? Q2: Could you please define the "developer" job role as listed in M6 part a?	Response to Q31: Please refer to Response in Question 10.
32	We noticed that the pre-bid submission deadline was extended to April 14, 2023 yet the closing date for the ITQ was not. We welcome the extension for pre-bid and are considering submitting response for feedback; however, we are concerned with the limited time between pre-bid deadline and the ITQ closing date. It is not clear when SSC would provide feedback following a pre-bid submission and whether this will afford Respondents with enough time to assess feedback and, as needed, adjust the response document in time for the closing date. We ask that you please extend the closing date equivalent to the extension provided for pre-bid submissions.	The Pre-bid and ITQ closings have been extended as per Amendment #003. Canada will provide pre-bid feedback in line with the requirements documented in section 3.4.g of the ITQ.
33	We sent our response in pdf format – would it be easier to review in Word format? Also, will you be reviewing the references at this time or will you wait until the final submission?	<p>Please refer to section 3.5b of the ITQ for accepted document types.</p> <p>With regard to references, Please refer to response in Q10.</p>