



**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
DEMANDE D'INFORMATION**

**RETURN RESPONSES TO :
RETOURNER LES RÉPONSES À:**

**NRC.BidReceiving-
ReceptiondesSoumissions.CNRC@nrc-
cnrc.gc.ca**

Proposal To: **National Research Council Canada**

We hereby offer to sell to His Majesty the King in right of Canada, in accordance with the terms and conditions set out herein, referred to herein or attached hereto, the goods, services, and construction listed herein and on any attached sheets at the price(s) set out thereof.

Proposition au : **Conseil national de recherches
Canada**

Nous offrons par la présente de vendre à Sa Majesté le Roi du chef du Canada, aux conditions énoncées ou incluses par référence dans la présente et aux annexes ci-jointes, les biens, services et construction énumérés ici sur toute feuille ci-annexée, au(x) prix indiqué(s).

**Instructions: See Herein
Instructions: Voir aux présentes**

Issuing Office - Bureau de distribution
National Research Council Canada
Conseil national de recherches Canada

Title/Sujet Patent Annuity Service Provider	
Solicitation No./N. de l'invitation 24-58033	Date June 5, 2024
Solicitation Closes/L'invitation prend fin at/à 14 :00 on/le July 5, 2024	Time Zone/Fuseau Horaire (ET)
Address Enquiries To/Adresser demandes de renseignements à : Annette Driscoll – <u>Annette.Driscoll@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca</u>	

Vendor/Firm Name and Address Raison sociale et adresse du fournisseur/de l'entrepreneur	
Telephone No./N. de telephone Facsimile No./N. de télécopieur	
Name and title of person authorized to sign on behalf of Vendor/Firm (type or print) Nom et titre de la personne autorisé à signer au nom du fournisseur/de l'entrepreneur (taper ou écrire en caractères d'imprimerie)	
Signature	Date



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Patent Annuity Service Provider

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 BACKGROUND

The National Research Council of Canada (NRC) is the Government of Canada's largest research organization supporting industrial innovation, the advancement of knowledge and technology development. The NRC collaborates with over 70 colleges, universities and hospitals annually and works with 800 companies on projects. The NRC also provides advice or funding to over 8000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) each year.

The overall goal of this Request for Information (RFI) is to engage industry and its suppliers to assemble information in regards to services of a patent annuity provider capable of managing and paying maintenance fees (also referred to as annuities or renewal fees) for patents and patent applications on behalf of the NRC. The NRC would like to migrate from the current process for payment of maintenance fees, as outlined below, to a more efficient process that streamlines the payment of maintenance fees to reduce potential for error and to reduce administrative burden.

The NRC National Programs and Business Services Branch currently manages a portfolio of over 1600 patents and patent applications in 46 jurisdictions; excluding provisional and Patent Cooperation Treaty applications. The top ten (10) jurisdictions in terms of volume are United States, Canada, Europe, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea, China, and Australia.

The NRC pays maintenance fees directly to the US, Canadian, and European patent offices and uses the services of over 90 different patent agent firms to pay maintenance fees to patent offices for all other jurisdictions. The approximate yearly number of maintenance fee deadlines for the patent portfolio managed by the NRC is 1100, of which approximately 44% are for US, Canada, or Europe.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to engage suppliers to:

- a) Provide industry with an early opportunity to assess, comment and make suggestions related to the requirements;
- b) Determine the capability of suppliers to provide and/or meet the requirements;
- c) Obtain supplier feedback on any issues that would impact their ability to bid on the resulting Solicitation and/or deliver on Canada's requirements;
- d) Gather industry knowledge, expertise and recommendations with regard to best practices that would increase the success of the project and/or identify any risks that would impact the project.
- e) Enhance competition, access and fairness.

1.3 NATURE OF THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

This RFI is not a bid solicitation and will not result in the award of any Contract or Standing Offer nor will this RFI result in the creation of a list of suppliers. Therefore, potential suppliers of any goods and services described in this RFI should not reserve stock or facilities, nor allocate resources, as a result of any information contained in this RFI.

Whether or not a potential supplier responds to this RFI, it will not preclude that supplier from participating in any future procurement process. Also, this RFI will not necessarily result in the procurement of any of the services that it describes. It is simply intended to solicit feedback with respect to its content. Nothing in this RFI shall be construed as a commitment from the National Research Council Canada (NRC). NRC may use any non-proprietary information obtained as part of this review in the preparation of future requirements.

2.0 INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO THE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

2.1 NATURE AND FORMAT OF RESPONSES REQUESTED

The department is seeking input and responses to specific questions (refer to Annex A) from the industry and suppliers covering important elements of the requirement prior to proceeding with finalizing its procurement strategy.

Respondents are invited to provide comments regarding the content of Annex A by completing and returning Annex A in accordance with 4.0 Submission of Responses. Respondents should explain any assumptions they make in their interpretation of the requirements.

2.2 RESPONSE COSTS

NRC will not reimburse any respondent for expenses incurred in responding to this RFI.

3.0 TREATMENT OF RESPONSES

3.1 USE OF RESPONSES

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

3.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained with this RFI will be treated as confidential. Respondents should indicate and mark any portions of their response that they consider proprietary or confidential. NRC will handle these portions in a confidential manner in accordance with the Access to Information Act of Canada.

Although one of the primary purposes of this RFI is to obtain information directly from industry that will be used by the NRC to develop or modify procurement strategies or any draft documents contained in this RFI, the NRC will in no way make any direct attribution of any information obtained from respondents that has been identified by respondents as “confidential” or “proprietary” within their Responses.

4.0 SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

4.1 IDENTIFICATION OF RESPONSE

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, NRC reserves the right to seek additional information at their sole discretion.

4.2 TIME AND PLACE FOR SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

Respondents are requested to submit responses by July 5th, 2024, 2:00 pm (ET). The review of responses will begin after the date and time mentioned above. Responses received after that date may not be reviewed. Vendors are requested to submit responses to this RFI to the Contracting Authority to the following NRC email address:

NRC.BidReceiving-ReceptiondesSoumissions.CNRC@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca

4.3 ENQUIRIES

Only enquiries which clarify the questions asked or feedback requested may be answered with respect to this RFI. All enquiries must be submitted via email to the attention of the Contracting Authority.

4.4 CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

Contracting Authority: Annette Driscoll
Finance and Procurement Services Branch
National Research Council Canada
Email address: Annette.Driscoll@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca

4.5 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Responses to this RFI are requested to be presented in either of the Official Languages of Canada (English or French).

5.0 FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Should respondents include information which is of particular relevance and interest to the NRC, and should the NRC (at its exclusive option) determine that follow-on clarification meeting(s) with one or more respondents would be of potential benefit to the NRC, then the NRC may (at its exclusive option) invite selected respondents to participate in “clarification meeting(s)” to provide clarification on their response(s), demonstrate their technologies or make a presentation to the NRC Contracting Authority and NRC Technical Authorities, in order for the NRC to learn more about the capabilities and features of their Response. Respondents interested in participating in a potential clarification meeting should clearly indicate their interest to present and/or demonstrate their capabilities, in relation to this RFI, in their response package. Should the NRC elect to have a clarification meeting, the NRC Contracting Authority will notify the respondent by email to schedule a meeting for a mutually agreed upon date and time.

In the event of such an occurrence, any requested clarification meetings may take place at the NRC’s facilities, location to be determined, or may take place via teleconference or other mutually convenient means, as agreed to between the NRC and the selected respondents.

The NRC will not reimburse any respondent for expenses incurred in responding to this RFI. Respondents will be responsible for all costs associated with the preparation and submission of any response to this RFI, including any costs associated with accepting the NRC’s invitation(s) to participate in any clarification meeting(s).

Annex A - RFI Questions

The following questions are representative of the type of information the NRC is seeking. This list of questions is not exhaustive, and respondents are invited to provide any additional information that might prove useful or beneficial to the NRC.

Respondents are invited to provide comments regarding the content of Annex A by completing and returning Annex A.

Questions	
1	Does the respondent charge new clients a set-up fee? Please explain what a new customer set-up entails. Response:
2	What patent data do clients need to provide for initial setup, and in what format? Response:
3	How do clients input new patent data after setup, when new information has to be added to the respondent's system/database? Response:
4	Does the respondent perform data verification on the patent data provided by clients? Response:
5	Does the respondent provide training to clients in terms of how to use their system platform/database? Describe how the training is delivered and the topics that are covered. If there is training, is there any limit to the amount of training provided and are there any fees associated with the training? Response:
6	How are maintenance fee payment instructions to be provided by the client? Response:
7	In the absence of instructions, does the respondent's system default to payment or non-payment? Can it be set up either way? Response:
8	If the default is non-payment, and the client does not provide instructions before the maintenance fee deadline, does the system automatically docket and seek instructions for the late payment deadline? Response:
9	How far in advance of a maintenance fee deadline does the respondent seek instructions from the client? Response:
10	How far in advance of a maintenance fee deadline does the respondent require instructions in order to timely pay a maintenance fee? Is there any point at which an urgency surcharge is applied? Response:
11	Does the respondent provide payment receipts or any other official confirmation that a maintenance fee has been paid? If yes, how are they communicated to the client?

	Response:
12	Does the respondent invoice before or after paying a maintenance fee? If before, how far in advance of the maintenance fee deadline does the respondent issue an invoice? Response:
13	What are the standard payment terms for invoices? Response:
14	In which currency, or currencies, does the respondent invoice? Response:
15	What form(s) of payment does the respondent accept? Response:
16	On what basis is the respondent's currency conversion rate determined? Response:
17	Does the respondent charge any currency conversion fee (e.g., mark-up or hedge) in addition to the currency conversion rate? Response:
18	Does the respondent charge any country-specific fee(s)? If so, for which countries? Response:
19	Does the respondent's service fee differ based on the size of the patent portfolio and/or the jurisdiction of a maintenance fee? If yes, please describe the fee structure in terms of how increased portfolio size and/or geographic location affect(s) costs. Response:
20	How frequently is the respondent's system updated to reflect changes in patent office rules and maintenance fee schedules? Response:
21	How frequently does the respondent's system update currency conversion rates? Response:
22	Once the client provides a maintenance fee payment instruction, is the cost fixed, or is it possible for the cost to fluctuate before an invoice is issued by the respondent? Response:
23	Does the respondent's system integrate with Wellspring's Sophia database? If so, please describe the nature of the integration. Response:
24	Does the respondent accept liability for losses relating to failure to meet maintenance fee payment obligations? If so, what losses are covered and is there any limit to that liability? Response:

25	<p>Are there any countries or patent offices for which the respondent does not provide services? If so, please identify the countries or patent offices for which service is not provided.</p> <p>Response:</p>
26	<p>Please provide any other information deemed important in terms of available services in response to this RFI.</p> <p>Response:</p>