Response to Help Desk RFP Bidder Questions

On July 24, 2012, the Western Climate Initiative, Incorporated (WCI, Inc.) released a request for proposals (RFP) for Help Desk services for the Compliance Instrument Tracking System Service (CITSS). As stated in the RFP, questions provided to WCI, Inc. in writing by 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Tuesday, July 31 will receive written responses from WCI, Inc. on or about August 3. Because there was a typographical error in one of the email addresses appearing in the RFP, WCI, Inc. announced that this deadline would be extended to 2:00 p.m. Pacific Time on Wednesday, August 1 to allow resubmission of any questions that could not be successfully delivered on time.

WCI, Inc. received 30 questions from five organizations. Some of these questions were identical or substantially similar across organizations. WCI, Inc. has organized these questions into the following categories:

- Staffing
- Inquiry Volume
- Training
- Use of Existing Material at WCI, Inc. or Its Participating Jurisdictions
- Support in English and French
- Other

The responses below do not constitute changes to the RFP and should not be interpreted as affecting any of its requirements. However, as a result of two questions asked below, WCI, Inc. has posted an addendum to the RFP. This response to questions and the RFP addendum is posted at http://www.wci-inc.org/rfp.php. To keep informed of this procurement, or of future procurements and other activities of WCI, Inc., please visit the WCI, Inc. website and subscribe to the WCI, Inc. electronic mailing list.

Staffing

1. Project Manager – should this person be assigned onsite WCI or offsite vendor's office?

   "Project Manager" refers to the Project Manager defined in RFP Section II.A, Project Requirements. The Project Manager is expected to be assigned at the Contractor's facility.

2. How many helpdesk agents needed per shift? How many shifts per day?

   The RFP Section II.A.2, Help Desk Availability, defines the times during which the Help Desk services must be provided. The RFP does not specify any requirements for the number of shifts per day to accomplish this required availability. The number of Help Desk agents required will depend on the volume of Help Desk inquiries. As explained in Section IV.B, Approach to Satisfying Project Requirements, bidders are asked to explain how they will "...adapt to variability in the rates and types of inquiries received while continuing to achieve the performance goals" for the project.

3. What are the qualifications of the help desk agents? Skill sets?

   The RFP Section II.A.3, Language, specifies that Help Desk services must be provided by personnel fluent in General English and/or International French. The RFP Section IV.E, Organization and Personnel Qualifications, describes required personnel qualifications. The RFP Section V, Evaluation, describes how the personnel qualifications are included in the proposal evaluation. The security requirements outlined in the RFP Section II.A.4, Security, must be met.

4. Please advise if it is a requirement that these agents be dedicated to the Western Climate program or if they may be shared on other non-competing programs.

   The RFP does not include a requirement that the Help Desk agents be dedicated to the Western Climate Initiative, Inc. project.

Inquiry Volume

5. What is the estimated volume of inquiries per day? Telephone? Email? Ticket system?

   A precise estimate of the expected volume of inquiries is not available at this time. During the performance of Task 1, Preparation, additional information is expected to be available regarding the volume of inquiries experienced by the California and Quebec programs prior to the start of the contract. As explained in RFP Section II.B, Definition of In-Scope and Other Inquiries, a new release of the CITSS will become available in the fall of 2012 that includes the ability to transfer compliance instruments. Additionally, the first allowance auction for the California program is scheduled for November 2012. Consequently, inquiries regarding account holdings and instrument transfers may be expected to be intensive starting in November 2012. For purposes of preparing cost estimates, RFP Section IV.D, Cost Proposal, includes a set of assumptions regarding the

volume of inquiries. However, the actual volume of inquiries may be less than or greater than the assumptions, and may vary over time.

6. What is the current and anticipated inquiry volume for e-mail and telephone between U.S.A. and Canada and also by English and French users?

    See responses to Questions 5 and 16.

Training

7. For the training of the designated contractor staff on CITSS, does it have to be face to face/onsite meeting/training?

    The RFP does not require training Help Desk agents in a face-to-face setting. If bidders propose face-to-face training, travel costs should be included in the proposal since the jurisdictional staff who are familiar with CITSS and CITSS-related inquiries and who would be providing such training are not expected to travel for this project. The jurisdictional staffs are based in Sacramento, California and Quebec City, Quebec.

8. How long is the training period for the app?

    A specific length for the training period is not specified in the RFP. The RFP Section II.C., Project Tasks, specifies that training should occur within Task 1, which is to be completed between the assumed contract start date of October 1 and October 31 (see RFP Section IV.C., Work Plan and Schedule).

9. Is their currently a training curriculum and materials in place for the agents? If so what is the duration of the training and will it be shared with [the Contractor] upon award? If not how many days of training do you estimate each agent would require and will OCI be required to create the materials as part of Task 1?

    There is no training curriculum in place for the agents. See Questions 10 and 11 for material available from Participating Jurisdictions that may contribute to training agents. See Question 8 regarding the duration of training. The RFP does not require the Contractor to develop material specifically for training, although it may choose to do so based on its approach to training its agents for projects of this type. The Contractor, however, is required to produce deliverables, such as those specified in Task 1 deliverables a, d, and e, which may be used in the process of training Help Desk agents.

Use of Existing Material at WCI, Inc. or Its Participating Jurisdictions

10. Is there a training manual in place for CITSS users currently for participating jurisdictions?

    No training manual has been developed. The RFP Section I, Purpose/Overview, provides links to resources currently available for the California and Quebec programs, including the *CITSS User Registration and Account Application Guide* developed for the California

program. Bidders may also be interested in a regulatory guidance document developed for the California program, which is available at: http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/guidance/guidance.htm

11. Are there existing Help Desk scripts, solutions, and related materials in place for participating jurisdictions?

    The Contractor is expected to develop these. No Help Desk scripts or solutions have been prepared by WCI, Inc. Material used by, and experience gained at, the Participating Jurisdictions while supporting the current release of CITSS will be shared with the Contractor as part of Task 1. WCI, Inc. does not warrant that the information provided based on the Participating Jurisdictions' experience will be sufficient in and of itself for purposes of the Contractor performing the Help Desk services.

12. What systems / applications are currently being used to track calls and maintain the agent knowledgebase materials?

    See response to Question 11.

13. Can these systems be extended to the Contractor or are you looking for us to provide our own platform?

    As described in RFP Section II.C., Project Tasks, the Contractor is expected under Task 1 to set up and demonstrate the Help Desk management and tracking system. The bidder is expected to provide its own platform that satisfies the project requirements, including the security requirements.

14. Will a migration of customer and knowledgebase data be required? If so please describe in detail.

    As noted above, there is no existing comprehensive knowledgebase for the Help Desk services. See also the responses to Questions 10 and 11.

15. Are the current agent call / workflows documented or is the expectation that the successful candidate do this as part of Task 1?

    The expectation is that the successful bidder will do this.

Support in English and French

16. What is the expected ratio of English to French inquiries?

    The expected ratio of English to French inquiries is not known precisely at this time. The California program (for which inquiries may be expected to be in English) is on the order of about 6 to 7 times larger than the Quebec program (for which inquiries may be expected to be in French or English), indicating the potential relative amount of inquiries that may be received in English and French.

17. Do requests for feedback after the opening/closure of a ticket need to be in the language the caller requested?

    As described in the RFP Section II.A.6, Performance Metrics and Goals, "The Contractor shall maintain and implement the capability to obtain objective input from the users of the Help Desk services regarding their satisfaction with the service." As described in Section IV.B, Approach to Satisfying Project Requirements, bidders are requested to describe how they will satisfy the Project Requirements, including this requirement to obtain user input. To obtain user input, bidders are advised to propose to solicit that input in the language in which the inquiry was made.

18. Do you have a suggestion for what we might expect the percentage distribution between French and English inquires to be, based on either current helpdesk experience or looking forward to serving the initially-participating jurisdictions?

    See response to Question 16.

19. It is anticipated that there will be a 30% growth in volume within three years. What is the breakdown in percentage between the U.S.A. and Canada and also by English and French users?

    The potential growth in CITSS users may come from additional jurisdictions implementing programs and from additional users participating in the existing programs. The relative proportion of French and English inquiries is not expected to change substantially.

Other

20. Please explain further #5 Accommodations under project requirements.

    In accordance with requirements such as those of the Americans with Disabilities Act and relevant state and provincial legislation for services provided by states, provinces, and businesses, Help Desk services must incorporate reasonable accommodations for access by persons with disabilities, including visually impaired and hearing impaired persons.

21. When you say transfer compliance instruments in the CITSS, what is being transferred ? Are these documents?

    As described in RFP Section I, Purpose/Overview, and its references, the Compliance Instrument Tracking System Service (CITSS) tracks compliance instruments (emission allowances and emission offset credits). Compliance instruments exist only in electronic form within the CITSS and are not documents. More information about compliance instruments and the cap-and-trade programs is available at the links provide in the RFP Section I, Purpose/Overview.

22. Instrument transfers? Like users are asking "How do I transfer instruments from my holding account to a compliance account?"

    See response to Question 21.

23. How will the demonstration of the vendor's helpdesk system be? Can it be through webinar or face to face meeting?

    RFP Section II.C., Project Tasks, specifies deliverable b) under Task 1 as, "Demonstration of the Help Desk management and tracking system to WCI, Inc. and Participating Jurisdictions in person and/or via webinar." See Question 7 regarding proposals for face-to-face meetings.

24. Do we provide WCI with a toll free number (TFN)?

    WCI, Inc. does not currently have a toll-free or any other phone number that may be used for the Help Desk. Bidders must include the provision of a TFN (usable in the US and Canada) in their proposals. This number must be transferable to WCI, Inc. or other vendor designated by WCI, Inc. upon WCI, Inc.'s request or at the termination of the contract. An addendum to the RFP has been posted on the WCI, Inc. website regarding this provision.

25. Does the vendor need to have an office in the US?

    The RFP does not require that the bidder have an office in the US or Canada. For security reasons, Help Desk agents, however, must register as users in the CITSS. For security reasons, CITSS user registration requires that the user have a primary residence in the United States or Canada [see RFP Section II.A.4.b.(ii)]. Also for security purposes, all data associated with the Contractor's work must be retained solely in the US and/or Canada. An addendum to the RFP has been posted on the WCI, Inc. website regarding this last provision.

26. If a phone call is answered by a non-French speaking Help Desk Personnel and the customer requests a French-speaking staff person, does the transfer/hold time count against the performance goal?

    Table 1 of the RFP establishes a goal of limiting hold times to less than two minutes for at least 80 percent of calls. Any time waiting for a French-speaking agent will be considered as part of the total hold time.

27. Page 3, "Help Desk Availability" notes holidays recognized by both the Canada and the United States. Can you confirm that there are five such holidays: New Year's Day, Labor/Labour Day, Columbus/Thanksgiving Day, Veterans/Remembrance Day, and Christmas Day?

    The four holidays observed both in the US and Canada are: January 1 (New Year's Day); the first Monday in September (Labor/Labour Day); the second Monday in October (Columbus Day/Thanksgiving); and December 25 (Christmas Day). Please note that November 11 (Veterans Day in the US) is not a holiday in Quebec.

28. During the pre-bid, it was mentioned that Attachment C would be provided so that proposers could indicate how they'd like to invoice for the work. Is the contract type also flexible?

    As stated in RFP Section IV.G, Exceptions to the WCI, Inc. Standard Contract Form, "WCI, Inc. intends to enter into a contract with the successful bidder using the WCI, Inc. Standard Contract Form (available at http://www.wci-inc.org/rfp.php)." This section further explains how WCI, Inc. would consider exceptions to the Standard Contract Form.

29. Please advise if it is a requirement that these agents be physically segregated in an isolated area off the normal production floor or if separation of the agents from other programs on the same production floor and logical segregation from a systems access perspective will suffice?

    As stated in RFP Section II.A.4, Security, "The Contractor must demonstrate the ability to achieve and maintain the security necessary to maintain the confidentiality of all CITSS account credentials, CITSS data, and CITSS user information." Also see Section IV.B, Approach to Satisfying Project Requirements, for more information on security requirements.

30. How many WCI users require access to the helpdesk application?

    The RFP does not require bidders to provide direct access to the Help Desk application to WCI, Inc. personnel, but if the bidder proposes to do so, access to the application should be provided for two WCI, Inc. employees and two employees at each participating program, of which there are currently two (California and Quebec).