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1. Contracts Hub RFI 2019-09-09
2. Contracts Hub RFI Responses to Questions 2019-09-09



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

FOR

Contracts Hub Solution

September 9, 2019

Deadline for questions, requests for clarification, or requests for additional information

September 16, 2019 before 5:00 PM
(Local Philadelphia Time)

City Responds to Questions

September 27, 2019

Responses to RFI Due

October 4, 2019 before 5:00 PM
(Local Philadelphia Time)

JAMES F. KENNEY, Mayor
Stephanie Tipton, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

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Calendar

RFI release date: September 9, 2019

Questions regarding the RFI due: September 16, 2019

Responses provided: September 27, 2019

RFI submission due date: October 4, 2019

Background and Context

Over the past several years, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) has worked to make contracting with the City of Philadelphia more efficient and effective. Our initiatives include improvements to our contract processes that make the City a better vendor partner.

We're proud that we have moved bid submission from an in-person paper-based process to a completely online process. We implemented several new technologies and policies to decrease the time it takes to execute a contract. We led the charge to pass a change to the City's Home Rule Charter (Charter) to allow Best Value¹ contracting and have implemented this process on several major procurements.

Despite these improvements, we still have a lot of work to do. A primary goal of our work is to increase the ease of doing business with the City to improve access to our contract opportunities by all vendors in order to spur competition and innovation.

Problem We Are Solving

Currently, the City of Philadelphia posts contract opportunities on four official City websites, depending on the type of opportunity. This system is often confusing to vendors who want to find out what the City is interested in buying. And, it's challenging for City employees tasked with outreach to the vendor community to explain which of the four websites they should be visiting to find opportunities for their business.

Businesses have given feedback to the City that they do not know where to start looking for contract opportunities if they are interested in doing business with the

¹ Best Value contracting allows the City to consider relevant factors other than price when awarding a contract through the Procurement Department. This change allows us to consider various components of the quality of a product or service, and consider if a business is local, or minority-, woman-, or disabled-owned.

City. This can result in businesses missing out on these opportunities and the City failing to fully maximize competition.

The City would like to receive more bids and proposals from a larger and more diverse group of bidders. Increasing competition leads to lower prices and higher quality. We want to work with local, small and diverse businesses so we can reinvest the City's tax dollars into the City's economy.

Though we want to help vendors find opportunities, we also need to maintain our current websites as the place where vendors apply for open contract opportunities.

These are the four websites where the City posts opportunities for contracting:

- "PHL Contracts" <https://www.phlcontracts.phila.gov/bsol> is where public works, supplies, non-professional services, and equipment bids are posted. Best Value Requests for Proposals (RFP) for these types of goods and services are also posted here.
- "eContract Philly" <https://secure.phila.gov/eContract/> is where professional services contract opportunities (RFPs) are posted.
- "Small Contracts, Big Ideas PHL" <https://bigideasphl.com/> is where departments are encouraged to post any type of opportunity under \$34,000, which are not legally required to be posted publicly.
- Requests for Proposals page <https://www.phila.gov/rfp/pages/default.aspx> is where RFPs for quasi-governmental agencies and RFIs can be posted.

Even when a business can find the correct website for what they are selling, the vendor interfaces are not always user-friendly. Businesses are not always able to search using keywords and are not always able to receive notifications of new opportunities, which would also help to increase transparency. This contributes to having a relatively high proportion of opportunities with only 1 or 2 respondents.

Lack of transparency is currently a problem particularly for contracts under \$34,000. There is no requirement to publicly post these contracts, so many departments just send a few solicitations via email rather than posting publicly. Allowing the contracts hub website to highlight small opportunities may also encourage departments to post these publicly.

Potential Solution

Though we are open to a variety of solutions to this problem, we are especially interested in low-cost solutions that would integrate or scrape the links to opportunities from these four websites and post them in one website. This website should:

- be designed with the user (vendors) in mind
- allow vendors to search to find relevant opportunities
- allow vendors to search for opportunities in specific sub-category types (such as by contract value, type of good or service, or by opportunities only open to local businesses)
- use a responsive, user-friendly design that improves the usability and desirability of the City's platform and adheres to the [City's digital standards](#)
- comply with ADA and WCAG 2.1 to ensure accessibility
- allow for internal ongoing maintenance by City employees
- allow for ongoing vendor engagement and education
- provide space to post explanatory content and links to other contract-related resources
- highlight new opportunities and/or allow for interested businesses to receive notifications and updates on newly posted opportunities.

We also want to be sure that our internal staff will be able to maintain this site after an initial engagement.

Current Systems

The City uses primarily two systems to manage procurement bids and professional services contract opportunities. For procurement, the City uses an off-the-shelf software, BuySpeed, built by Periscope Holdings, LLC. This software includes the public-facing PHL Contracts website, and an internal system for managing the bid and award process. This system has an API.

For Professional Services, this City uses software called Automated Contract Information System (ACIS), maintained by Information Services Partners (ISP). The public portal for these opportunities is eContract Philly, which is also maintained by ISP.

The City maintains the Small Contracts, Big Ideas PHL website and the RFP website internally.

How to Respond

Your proposal should also include:

- a cover letter which summarizes your response and indicates if supporting documentation is included in your response
- the response to the RFI, answering the questions below
- any supplementary documents.

Please limit your response to 10 or fewer pages, including RFI answers and supplementary documents.

Complete the following sections as part of your response:

- Company overview, including such things as:
 - how many years your company has been in business;
 - where your business is headquartered;
 - whether your company is a certified Minority, Woman, or Disabled-owned business;
 - staffing size and structure; and,
 - any other information you believe sets your company apart.
- Please describe how your organization would address the problem outlined in the RFI.
- Provide links to any examples of websites that use your solution.
- Note any anticipated challenges or areas of concern based on the information available to you.
- Explain how you would ensure that City staff can maintain this website after the engagement ends.
 - How would you help the City think through a governance model so content remains accurate over time?
 - How will you ensure an internal content team can maintain the tool beyond the scope of the work?
 - What will your knowledge transfer look like upon project completion?
- Describe your pricing model. Include both project work and post-project work.

- Provide the security details of your solution.

Respondents should submit their responses electronically (hard copies are unacceptable) in MS Word or Adobe PDF format, as a single document (see note below), to:

Name: Laura White
Title: Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Department: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Email: Laura.White@phila.gov

Responses are due October 4, 2019, before 5:00 pm, Local Philadelphia Time.

Note: Response document(s) are limited to 15 MB; if necessary, please submit multiple files or zip/compress the file(s).

RFI Contact Information for Questions, Clarifications

All questions (see RFI Question Template Exhibit) and requests for clarification concerning this RFI must be in writing and submitted via email no later than 5:00 p.m., local Philadelphia time on September 16, 2019, to:

Name: Laura White
Title: Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Department: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Email: Laura.White@phila.gov

Responses to questions and requests for additional information shall be at the sole discretion of the City. Any additional information and/or responses to questions will be posted only on the City's website at <http://www.phila.gov/rfp> ("Additional Opportunities"). No additional information and/or responses to questions will be sent by email. Nothing in this RFI shall create an obligation on the City to respond to a Respondent submitting a response.

The City may, in its sole discretion, issue addenda to this RFI containing responses to questions, clarifications of the RFI, revisions to the RFI or any other matters that

the City deems appropriate. Addenda, if any, will be posted on the City's website at <http://www.phila.gov/rfp> ("Additional Opportunities"). It is the Respondent's responsibility to monitor the Additional Opportunities site for Addenda and to comply with any new information.

Oral responses made by any City employee or agent of the City in response to questions or requests for information or clarification related to this RFI are not binding and shall not in any way be considered as a commitment by the City.

If a Respondent finds any inconsistency or ambiguity in the RFI or an addendum to the RFI issued by the City, the Respondent is requested to notify the City in writing by the above deadline for questions and requests for information or clarification.

Use of Responses

Responses to this RFI may be used by CAO to select a software product for a Contracts Hub. Responses may also be used to assist CAO in gathering information for planning purposes, and for purposes of identifying sufficient resources for an implementation initiative.

The City does not intend to announce any further actions taken pursuant to this RFI. If any such announcements are made, at the sole discretion of the City, those announcements will be posted with the original RFI. In some cases, at the City's sole discretion, the City may issue an RFP. The City will notify Respondents to this RFI once the RFP has been posted on the City's website.

The City will notify you if additional information is required in order to evaluate your response to this RFI. Absent such follow up from the City, we respectfully request that respondents refrain from requesting additional information on the status of this RFI. In order to protect the integrity of the City procurement process, City personnel will not respond to requests for additional information on the status or outcome of this RFI, other than as described above.

No contract will be awarded pursuant to this RFI. Anyone who does not respond to this RFI is not precluded from responding to any future solicitation issued by the City. Respondents will not be bound by the cost estimates provided in their responses to this RFI in a future procurement. The City also reserves the right to not procure any software.

Confidentiality and Public Disclosure

Respondents shall treat all information obtained from the City which is not generally available to the public as confidential and/or proprietary to the City. Respondents shall exercise all reasonable precautions to prevent any information derived from such sources from being disclosed to any other person. No other party, including any Respondent, is intended to be granted any rights hereunder.

Rights and Options Reserved

In addition to the rights reserved elsewhere in this RFI, the City reserves and may, in its sole discretion, exercise any or more of the following rights and options with respect to this RFI if the City determines that doing so is in the best interest of the City:

1. Decline to consider any response to this RFI (“response”); cancel the RFI at any time; elect to proceed or not to proceed with discussions or presentations regarding its subject matter with any Respondent and with firms that do not respond to the RFI; to reissue the RFI or to issue a new RFI (with the same, similar or different terms);
2. Select a COTS package from a vendor that does not respond to this RFI, or elect not to proceed with any procurement;
3. Waive, for any response, any defect, deficiency or failure to comply with the RFI if, in the City’s sole judgment, such defect is not material to the response;
4. Extend the Submission Date/Time and/or to supplement, amend, substitute or otherwise modify the RFI at any time prior to the Submission Date/Time, by posting notice thereof on the City web page(s) where the RFI is posted;
5. Require, permit or reject amendments (including, without limitation, submitting information omitted), modifications, clarifying information, and/or corrections to responses by some or all Respondents at any time before or after the Submission Date/Time;

6. Require, request or permit, in discussion with any Respondent, any information relating to the subject matter of this RFI that the City deems appropriate, whether it was described in the response to this RFI;
7. Discontinue, at any time determined by the City, discussions with any Respondent or all Respondents regarding the subject matter of this RFI, and/or initiate discussions with any other Respondent or with vendors that did not respond to the RFI;
8. To conduct such investigations with respect to the financial, technical, and other qualifications of the Respondent as the City, in its sole discretion, deems necessary or appropriate;
9. Do any of the foregoing without notice to Respondents or others, except such notice as the City, in its sole discretion, may elect to post on the City web page(s) where this RFI is posted.

This RFI and the process described are proprietary to the City and are for exclusive benefit of the City. Upon submission, responses to this RFI shall become the property of the City, which shall have unrestricted use thereof.

Public Disclosure

By submitting a response to this RFI, Respondent acknowledges and agrees i) that the City is a “local agency” under and subject to the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law (the “Act”), 65 P.S. §§ 67.101-67.3104, as the Act may be amended from time to time; and ii) responses may be subject to public disclosure under the Act. In the event the City receives a request under the Act for information that a Respondent has marked as confidential, the City will use reasonable efforts to consult with Respondent regarding the response and, to the extent reasonably practicable, will give Respondent the opportunity to identify information that Respondent believes to be confidential proprietary information, a trade secret, or otherwise exempt from access under Section 708 of the Act.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this RFI, nothing in this RFI shall supersede, modify, or diminish in any respect whatsoever any of the City's rights, obligations, and defenses under the Act, nor will the City be held liable for any disclosure of records, including information that the City determines in its sole discretion is a public record and/or information required to be disclosed under the Act.

Contracts Hub RFI Q&A

Respondent Name:		
Question Number	RFI Section # (If applicable)	Question(s)
1.		<p>Re: the current systems and their development/maintenance contracts: are any of the current systems expected to be redeveloped/redesigned in the near future? If so, how will this impact the work proposed in this RFI?</p> <p>We are in the planning stages for a new enterprise resource planning system, which will provide a new unified system and portal for all purchasing. That system will not be rolled out city-wide for at least 2-4 years. We are looking for a solution that will operate by June 2020 until that new unified portal is fully operational. Additionally, when an ERP system is selected this contract may be amended to include both legacy opportunities and opportunities from the new ERP system until everything exists on one system.</p>
2.		<p>Is the City primarily interested in existing commercial off-the-shelf solutions?</p> <p>Not necessarily, we are open to learning about potential custom solutions as long as there would be a way for our staff to maintain them.</p>
3.		<p>As part of this RFI, is the City considering new or expanded e-procurement punchout capabilities? If yes, what platforms have already been considered? Would the City be using this for PO/Invoice?</p> <p>No, we are not considering that at this time.</p>
4.		<p>Does the City have a company under contract for set-up and project management?</p> <p>No, this project will be managed by City employees.</p>
5.		<p>Does Periscope have any Project Management responsibilities?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Does Periscope have any oversight into the City's user buying experience or catalog hosting?</p> <p>No.</p>
6.		<p>Does the City have any known requirements around how their current Periscope environment has to be managed in the future?</p> <p>Not at this time, it is SaaS.</p>

Contracts Hub RFI Q&A

Respondent Name:		
Question Number	RFI Section # (If applicable)	Question(s)
7.		<p>Will the City extend the Q&A period? No additional questions will be answered.</p>
8.		<p>Is there any reason why a current vendor would not be considered to provide a solution for this request (any conflict of interest concerns or limitations)? This request is simply a request for information (RFI), so there are no conflict of interest concerns in providing information. See here for information on eligibility restrictions for Request for Proposal responses: https://secure.phila.gov/ECONTRACT/documents/frmPDFWindow.aspx?docid=97DisclosureOverview2N&ext=pdf</p>
9.		<p>There appears to be some overlap between the current (4) sites, and certain opportunities. For example, this opportunity was found in the list of RFPs and received from Big Ideas PHL. Is that common? Big Ideas PHL is a site that City employees can post on to expand the reach of their opportunities, so opportunities there may overlap with other sites. Other than that, overlap is not common.</p>
10.		<p>If the new opportunities are pulled from the (4) sites and there's overlap, then the results could show duplicate opportunities; which could cause confusion for the vendor(s). What would be a reason for an opportunity to be listed in more than one location? See above.</p>
11.		<p>In reference to the following statement, <i>“Though we want to help vendors find opportunities, we also need to maintain our current websites as the place where vendors apply for open contract opportunities.”</i>; please clarify/confirm that the new site would provide a central location for the opportunities to be listed, but that vendors would then go to the appropriate site to apply as usual. We confirm that the current site would be a central location for opportunities to be listed, but vendors would then go to the appropriate site to apply as usual. The opportunity listing on our four current websites will still exist.</p>

Contracts Hub RFI Q&A

Respondent Name:		
Question Number	RFI Section # (If applicable)	Question(s)
12.		<p>What are the technology profiles for each of the (4) current sites? i.e. languages, platforms, databases, etc.</p> <p>BigIdeasPHL is a Wordpress website. PHL Contracts has an API. We cannot provide more information about these platforms at this time.</p>
13.		<p>Are there any login requirements that will need to continue for vendors to see certain opportunities?</p> <p>Generally, all opportunities should be open to the public to view. Exceptions could include sole source contracts.</p>
14.		<p>You mentioned that transparency is a concern and that you'd like to encourage the departments to publicly post small opportunities more often. How does the posting process differ between the (4) sites, for the managers who are listing the opportunity? We'd like to understand the difference in the processes, to see if highlighting the smaller opportunities will be enough to encourage the managers to change their current thinking, or if additional suggestions would be more helpful to you.</p> <p>The posting processes for the four sites are run by different City employees, so departments communicate with the appropriate employee to post on the appropriate site. We do not believe that the contracts hub website alone will be enough to change manager's behavior who have not been posting small opportunities, and plan to take other actions outside of this RFI scope to support that change. While we are open to other suggestions, they are not part of the scope of this RFI.</p>
15.		<p>Some cooperation, information and support will likely be needed by the vendors maintaining the eContract Philly and BuySpeed sites. Do you anticipate any challenges with these vendors, in reference to this effort?</p> <p>We work with these vendors regularly and do not anticipate major challenges in communication. We would plan in appropriate time for communication with vendors in our project timeline.</p>
16.		<p>Is there a specific deadline for having this site up, tested and running?</p> <p>June 2020.</p>

Contracts Hub RFI Q&A

Respondent Name:		
Question Number	RFI Section # (If applicable)	Question(s)
17.		<p>Will a liaison from the CAO team be provided to coordinate with the necessary City departments and vendors, and to conduct and certify the user acceptance testing?</p> <p>Yes, a primary liaison will be assigned and other City technical staff would be available as needed.</p>
18.		<p>In the last paragraph in the “Use of Responses” section of the opportunity listing, it states: “No contract will be awarded pursuant to this RFI”; does that mean that the solutions provided cannot result in an engagement being awarded and that this is for informational purposes only?</p> <p>This Request for Information is for informational purposes only. If the City decides to proceed with buying a solution to the problem described in this RFI, we will post another Request for Proposals (RFP) that can lead to a contract. All respondents to this RFI will be notified of any RFP for this solution. Any respondent could then also propose their solution for the RFP. The City reserves the right to decide not to continue with an RFP.</p>