



VENDOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question 1:

According to the information in the RFP, it is noted that CN has been selected for eight states. What are these eight states?

Answer 1:

CN is the designated entity in Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Additionally, CN is working as the sub-grantee and/or prime contractor in Alaska, Puerto Rico, Ohio, Florida, and Illinois.

Question 2:

Your RFP for Broadband Data Processing (RFP No. 200901) outlines a timetable whereby a contract will be let on December 22. It also states that data delivery deadlines are (currently) February 1 and March 1. Is it correct to anticipate that most subcontract work awarded under this RFP will be completed during the approximately five weeks between December 22, 2009 and February 1, 2010, and all work no later than March 1, 2010?

Answer 2:

Yes, the bulk of the work will be conducted and due during the period between December 22, 2009 and March 1, 2010 according to the deadlines set forth by the NTIA for delivery of a substantially complete data set. All dates and requirements of this RFP are subject to any future requirement modifications by NTIA. After March 1, 2010, the Vendor(s) may be asked to assist CN with data collection, data translation, and GIS mapping to ensure timely delivery of semi-annual updates to NTIA.

Question 3:

Is there a minimum firm size or minimum number of available GIS Analysts required?

Answer 3:

There are no firm size requirements for this project.

Question 4:

The project timeline referenced in this section requires a substantially complete data set by February 1, 2010. The contract execution date is defined as December 22, 2009 on page 5, leaving a little over five weeks to have the data set substantially complete. Do you have an estimate as to the total number of man hours of work that the Vendor will be required to perform in that five-week period? If not, will the Vendor be able to specify how many “work packets” we can produce in the five-week period based on the sample work packets provided as part of the Phase II RFP process?

Answer 4:

As the processing of data will coincide with the collection of data for this project, CN will be unable to specify a number of hours that might potentially be required to complete all work packets. CN intends that based on the sample work packets provided during Phase II, a Vendor could calculate and propose their potential workload.

Question 5:

Is there a specific state or group of states covered in the project? Does the Vendor’s geographic location (as long as it is in the United States) have anything to do with the selection process or the work areas that may be assigned?

Answer 5:

CN is the designated entity in Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Additionally, CN is working as the sub-grantee and/or prime contractor in Alaska, Puerto Rico, Ohio, Florida, and Illinois. The only requirement is that the Vendor must be located in and utilize labor from within the United States.

Question 6:

Does responding to Phase I commit the Vendor to respond to Phase II? If a Vendor responds to Phase I, but elects not to respond to Phase II based on the additional information that will be provided in Phase II, are there any legal, financial, or other consequences?

Answer 6:

The answer is no to both questions. Consistent with the terms of the RFP, all costs associated with preparation of the response are to be born by the Vendor.

Question 7:

In Section 2.3, Term of Contract, it says that the contract will end on December 22, 2010. In Section 1.0, the text says that the complete data set must be delivered on March 1, 2010. Is there any expected work to be performed after March 1, 2010?

Answer 7:

CN may elect to extend the Vendor's contract through December 22, 2010. After March 1, 2010, the Vendor may be asked to continue assisting CN with similar services to ensure timely delivery of semi-annual updates to NTIA.

Question 8:

In Section 2.6, the opening sentence says that "By submitting a response to this RFP, Offeror agrees to acceptance of the Nondisclosure Agreement, the Vendor Contract, and Standard Terms and Conditions for Contracts and Grants Using ARRA Funds as set forth in Appendices A, B, and C of this RFP." Does the "response" mentioned at the start of the above sentence refer to Phase I or Phase II?

Answer 8:

All Vendors must agree to accept all terms in the RFP, NDA, Vendor Contract, and the Standard Terms and Conditions for Contracts and Grants Using ARRA Funds before they can move on to Phase II. If a Vendor has an exception to language in one or all of these documents they may include such exceptions in their response to Phase I. If CN agrees to all stated exceptions to terms then that Vendor may move on to Phase II.

Question 9:

Will CN provide the selected Vendor(s) with background GIS layers (such as roads, counties, cities, railroads, rivers, quads, orthophotos, etc.) to use as a frame of reference on which to lay the broadband GIS layer? If not, what will be the source for the background frame of reference layers?

Answer 9:

CN will provide the Vendor(s) the necessary information regarding GIS layers; however, if a Vendor deems additional layers necessary to complete the processing work that should be noted and properly accounted for in the Vendor's proposal.

Question 10:

Will the selected Vendor(s) be required to work with any local, City or County personnel to determine what GIS layers may exist for their area to be used as background layers? For example, if a County has parcel data in a GIS format, will the broadband polygons created by the Vendor be required to mathematically follow those parcel boundaries?

Answer 10:

It is not anticipated that there will be any requirements for the Vendor to interact with any outside entities in regard to this RFP.

Question 11:

In Appendix B, Vendor/Third Parties/Subcontractors, it says that CN can require background checks for the Vendor's employees. Will the Vendor be reimbursed for the costs of the background checks? Will the project schedule be extended due to the time required to perform the background checks?

Answer 11:

CN reserves the right to require Vendors to conduct background checks. If such background checks are required it would occur during the final stage of the RFP when the Evaluation Committee has narrowed down the number of applicants. All costs associated with replying to this RFP are to be the sole responsibility of the Vendors submitting a response. The timeline will not be extended in order to perform reasonable background checks.

Question 12:

Will the selected Vendor be working on an hourly basis or a lump-sum basis?

Answer 12:

The RFP specifies hourly compensation.

Question 13:

If the Vendor will be paid on an hourly basis, will CN allow the Vendor to be reimbursed for expenses that arise from the project such as mileage, hotels, meals, supplies, shipping, etc.?

Answer 13:

CN does not anticipate any ancillary expenses associated with the work contemplated by this RFP. If a Vendor feels it may incur such ancillary expenses such as mileage, hotels, meals, supplies, shipping, etc., the Vendor should include an estimate of such expenses in the response.

Question 14:

In Appendix B, Liquidated Damages, it contains blanks for the daily cost of liquidated damages and the total “not to exceed” cost for liquidated damages. Can you fill in the dollar amount for these blanks since our response to the RFP commits us to the terms of the Appendix and the other Appendices?

Answer 14:

CN does not anticipate utilizing this liquidated provision; however, CN reserves the right to collect such damages in the event that a default by the Vendor results in the loss of a grant or a state contract. If this situation were to occur, the maximum amount of damages would include the amount CN lost on the grant or contract, as determined by CN.

Question 15:

Are there any DBE, MBE, or WBE requirements for this project? Will DBE, MBE, or WBE participation be included as part of the proposal evaluation process?

Answer 15:

CN will use reasonable and good faith efforts to solicit and utilize DGS certified DBE, MBE, and WBEs.

Question 16:

Has CN contracted with firms in the past to provide services similar to those requested in the RFP? Are those firms eligible to send in a proposal?

Answer 16:

CN has not contracted out this type of work in the past.

Question 17:

The deadline for questions and responses is very short. Would CN consider a one-week extension for Phase I responses?

Answer 17:

There will be no extension for Phase I responses. As stated in the RFP, Phase II is open to all Vendors. In order to proceed to bid on Phase II of this RFP, all applicants must satisfy the requirements of Phase I as determined by CN. If an applicant has not met the requirements of Phase I by the Phase I RFP Response due date, they will still have the opportunity to meet such requirements and bid before the deadline for responses for Phase II.

Question 18:

The cost for doing work in Phase II will be impacted by the overall size of the assignment. A lower rate can be offered if the project is large in scale. Can you provide an order of magnitude as to the number of hours or number of people you envision contracted out to third parties during the first year of Phase II?

Answer 18:

At this stage in the data collection process, it is not feasible for CN to try to account for the number of person hours that might be necessary to complete the work. CN will be working with providers in several states and this effort will likely result in several hundred data sets that will need to be translated into GIS data.

Question 19:

As a very small business are there opportunities on this broadband mapping project related to project management support for GIS data conversion and data integration?

Answer 19:

Project management work is beyond the scope of this RFP.

Question 20:

Can the project management be done remotely? Can the Vendor provide the managerial support staff to CN on a full-time basis, but not necessarily be on-site every day of the week in the CN office where the work is performed?

Answer 20:

Project management or managerial support work is beyond the scope of this RFP.

Question 21:

Can a small business provide technical on-call support?

Answer 21:

This type of work is beyond the scope of this RFP.

Question 22:

Is there some set-aside aspect to this project/RFP for minority-owned businesses located in Kentucky?

Answer 22:

CN will use reasonable and good faith efforts to solicit and utilize DGS certified DBE, MBE, and WBEs.

Question 23:

What is the potential value of these contracts to a successful Offeror?

Answer 23:

The potential value of these contracts will be based on the resulting number of work packets that are found to be necessary and the rate by which each of these packets are assigned by each individual provider. It is difficult to attempt to estimate the potential value without knowing the exact number of work packets and the individual cost rates that a Vendor might propose.

Question 24:

Please confirm that an Offeror can submit Phase I responses up to the Phase II response deadline of December 4, 2009.

Answer 24:

Although it is preferable that all Offerors submit their Phase I responses by the Phase I due date, CN will continue to accept Phase I responses up until the Phase II response deadline. However, the Offeror will not receive the material needed to compile a Phase II response until they have completed Phase I. As a result, it is highly encouraged that Offerors turn in their Phase I responses as soon as possible.

Question 25:

Can a potential Offeror receive Phase II work packets to review and quote while they concurrently prepare the Phase I response? If yes, what Vendor information would be needed to receive the work packets?

Answer 25:

An Offeror will not receive a Phase II work packet until they have been approved to move on to Phase II, based on their submission for Phase I. Therefore it would not be possible to work on the two Phases simultaneously.

Question 26:

If a company is working on other state broadband initiatives inside of the United States is that considered a conflict of interest?

Answer 26:

Throughout this project, CN will be working within the federal guidelines set forth by NTIA and the Recovery Act. All Vendors are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest in their proposals. CN reserves the right to determine whether or not any particular situation constitutes a conflict of interest.

Question 27:

If a company has submitted proposals to RFPs to states that CN has also submitted proposals to, is that considered a conflict of interest?

Answer 27:

Throughout this project, CN will be working within the federal guidelines set forth by NTIA and the Recovery Act. All Vendors are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest in their proposals. CN reserves the right to determine whether or not any particular situation constitutes a conflict of interest.

Question 28:

What if a Vendor has no financial statements to provide as part of the information biography requirements for Phase I?

Answer 28:

The Vendor should provide annual financial statements if available. If not, please provide the most recent interim financial statement as well as any pro-forma financial statements used when starting your company. CN reserves the right to declare those proposals not accompanied by appropriate financial documentation as non-responsive.

Question 29:

I have a subcontractor working for me. What additional information do I need to provide about him?

Answer 29:

According to Section 4.2.2(b) of the RFP, Offerors must identify whether or not any subcontractors will be used by the contractor to perform any of the duties relating to the completion of the project. Offerors must provide professional biographies for all contractors, subcontractors, and respective key employees to include names, applicable organizations, experience, and all other biographical requirements of the key employees of the contractor. Any subcontractor must also have operations in the United States.

Some additional requirements in regard to subcontractors are included in the Vendor Contract, Section 3. In particular, "If the Vendor intends to subcontract any part of its performance, the Vendor must provide for written approval by CN the:

- a. Name, address and telephone number of the subcontractor(s);
- b. Specific tasks for each subcontractor(s);
- c. Percentage of performance hours intended for each subcontract; and
- d. Total percentage of subcontractor(s) performance hours."

Question 30:

Can a Vendor provide technical expertise in project management QA/QC and play the role of project manager by managing other Vendors?

Answer 30:

The roles and responsibilities outlined in this question are outside of the scope of work in this RFP.

Question 31:

What does CN mean by GIS implementation? Is the data conversion procedure, software implementation, work flow procedure/methodology of converting CAD files, shapefiles, text files and/or digitization process? Or does it involve installing ESRI software at the CN operational offices where the project will be actively worked on?

Answer 31:

This statement refers to all procedures, analysis, formatting, etc. that would be used to conduct the transformation of broadband data received from providers in assorted formats to a standardized GIS format as outlined in the RFP. It is not contemplated that the installation nor support of any particular software suite nor other IT technical services of ESRI software nor otherwise will be necessary.

Question 32:

Will third-party software already be in place for conversion work? E.g. software by AutoCAD, MapInfo, and Adobe Illustrator as well as Safes Software.

Answer 32:

Having software outside of ESRI ArcGIS software is not a requirement. The conversion of data is not required to go through these other software systems, but if a Vendor believes that it would be beneficial for them to work with these products, then they will need to specify that in their response. However, CN will likely not pay for such software and the same should not be included in the pricing proposals.

Question 33:

Is there an Internet Mapping component to this project? Are you planning to use ArcGIS server or Google maps or MapPoint?

Answer 33:

No.

Question 34:

Is a “work packet” defined by hours or by listed tasks?

Answer 34:

The work packet is a set of broadband data, comparable to what is received by broadband providers, that will need to be processed. It is essentially an example of the type of work to be completed in this project for potential Vendors to work with, analyze and provide results. Vendor responses on the work packet will include the finished processed data provided by the work packet, as well as the descriptions of time taken to complete packet.

Question 35:

The Project Background section on page 6 provides an overview of the strategic relationship between Connected Nation and ESRI. What role will ESRI be playing in the Phase II work compared to the work that will be required from the selected Vendor(s)? Will we be required to use the ESRI Broadband Stat platform? What portion of the Phase II work will be performed by Connected Nation?

Answer 35:

Any involvement of ESRI in Phase II work will not be of a like nature to the work anticipated to be proposed by Vendors. Vendors will not be using the ESRI Broadband Stat platform, but rather assisting in the processing of provider data as outlined in the work packets to be supplied as a part of the Phase II response.

Question 36:

Section 3.2.1 refers to Open Records requests. If Connected Nation is a private entity, why would you be subject or bound by Open Records requests? Is the Open Records requirement only relevant if the subcontractor(s) is selected to perform work, through Connected Nation, for one of its state or territory clients?

Answer 36:

Open Records laws vary from state to state. CN does not anticipate any Open Records issues; however, CN chose to inform any potential bidder of the possibility so interested Vendors could properly investigate the issue as a part of their due diligence in preparing a response.

Question 37:

In Section 3.2.2, there is discussion of an evaluation committee. Can you please tell us who will be on that committee?

Answer 37:

The Evaluation Committee will be comprised of highly experienced experts within Connected Nation.

Question 38:

In Section 3.3, there is language surrounding the classification of proposals as responsive or non-responsive. In this section, it is stated that “Proposals may be found to be nonresponsive at any time during the procurement process if any of the required information is not provided; the submitted price is found to be excessive or inadequate as measured by the criteria stated in the RFP; or the proposal is not within the plans and specifications described and required in the RFP.” We have several questions surrounding this section. (1) Why would a price be considered nonresponsive? Wouldn't it be measured based upon other responses or expectations? (2) There is no indication of the criteria for pricing. What is that criteria? Does it differ by state or territory?

Answer 38:

- (1) If the proposal fails to answer the question regarding hourly rate, it will be deemed non-responsive.
- (2) The criteria consist of hourly pricing based on work packets. No.

Question 39:

In Section 3.3.5, it is stated that “CN reserves the right to request a best and final offer for this RFP, if any, based on price/cost alone.” Would every Vendor have the opportunity to submit their best and final offer?

Answer 39:

Every bidder is encouraged to deliver their best and final offer in their RFP response. In this provision, CN simply reserves the right to request a best and final offer, which may likely be the same as presented in their RFP response, from those Vendors who have been approved by the Evaluation Committee.

Question 40:

In Section 4.2.1(a), you are asking for the respondent to provide a description of why one has “the ability, capacity, and the skill to deliver and implement the system or project that meets the requirements of the Request for Proposal.” There is no detail in this RFP regarding this system. Can you provide a detailed description of the system?

Answer 40:

The system refers to that process an individual Vendor may employ to complete data conversion of collected broadband provider data into the GIS format outlined in the RFP.

Question 41:

In Section 4.2.1(c), you ask the respondent to state “whether the bidder can perform the contract within the specified time frame.” To determine that answer, we must have a complete understanding of what is being requested. As mentioned above, can you provide the respondents with a detailed description of the project?

Answer 41:

Delivery of the work packets in Phase II will allow Vendors to see what type of work is available and calculate processing time for comparable work packets. This is the standard and one of the criteria by which Vendors will be evaluated.

Question 42:

Response for Phase I, Section 6.0 requires certification that operations are in the United States of America, what type of documentation would be acceptable to provide this certification? Would a certification of Good Standing from the Louisiana Secretary of State be sufficient?

Answer 42:

Yes, certification of Good Standing the Secretary of State would be sufficient. CN does reserve the right to investigate this matter further and require additional support from any Vendor as the case may be.