RFP: | RFP-ACT-SACT-23-44 - Political Military – Assisted Decision Making (PM-ADM) Proof of Concept/Demonstrator

Reference: | Q & A #2

Date of | 14 June 2023 | Issue:

The following questions were raised with respect to subject RFP. Responses are to provide clarification.

| Questions | Responses |
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| 1. Within Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 4.b (2) it's stated "The proof of concept/demonstrator shall be available in a Software-as- a-Service (SaaS) paradigm, running at the contractor's facility". Is it also possible to run the service in a contractors cloud environment like MS Azure? | 1. Yes |
| 2. Should possible costs for access to the data sources be included within the fixed price or will they be inquired additionally? | 2. All costs should be included within the fixed price. |
| 3. Within Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 2.b (2) the RFP mentions, "discern risk levels to NATO interest(s)". Are there already predefined/labeled risk levels to specific situations? Will they be provided by NATO/SACT during the contract? | 3. Predefined risk for NATO interests are not existent. Thus, they cannot be provided as requested. Rather, it will be part of the discovery process during development to devise a rating paradigm fit for purpose. |
| 4. Annex B: Requirements Matrix, Mandatory Criteria: Can the NATO Secret clearance be requested with the contract? | 4. Key personnel shall hold the valid NATO SECRET-level security clearance at the moment of bidding for the subject RFP. |
| 5. Within Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 2.b (4) the RFP notes that the Demonstrator should "Determine proposed courses of action to mitigate the risk". Are there any courses of action already predefined? Do the possible courses of action need to be | 5. No predetermined COAs exist relevant to this effort. COA's, or more appropriately, Response Options (RO) will be developed during system use for the situation at hand. RO's are an initial description of a response but does not rise to the level of completeness of a COA. |

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| defined by the contractor and based on evaluated risks? | |
| 6. Regarding Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 4.d (4): Are there any specific requirements to the way the data can be queried? Is a text prompt to enter queries in a formal query language sufficient for the user interface? | 6. An operational, but not necessarily technical, user should be able to compose and execute a query. |
| 7. Within Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 2.b. (3) the RFP mentions that the demonstrator should "Determine what NATO protected assets are at risk (…)". Is the bidder free in picking kind and number of NATO protected assets to implement within the demonstrator? According to NATO Term definition of asset as "useful or valuable thing or person." Which level of detail is required, is an asset a person, equity, military systems or nations? | 7. Assets at risk in a strategic context means entities at the individual, group, and total levels. For instance power plants. One, several, a province/state, nation, or region (Europe or a subdivision thereof). Also, these power plants feed a power distribution network(s), which are assets as well. Power affects NATO and member installations, as well as dependent networks such as transport and sanitation. An asset could be in one or multiple DOTMLPFI domains. |
| 8. Regarding Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 2.b (4): According to NATO standardization a "course of action" is "an option that will accomplish or contribute to the accomplishment of a mission or task, and from which a detailed plan is developed." Which capabilities and boundaries (legal, funding etc.) should be applied to propose a course of action? | 8. As noted above in response 5, the proof of concept will support Response Options rather than COAs. |
| 9. Should the demonstrator include scenarios, mechanics and actions beyond the threshold of NATO article 5, collective defence? | 9. A scenario will be provided that provides a target for the data collection effort. It may include examples across the spectrum of conflict from peaceful economic competition to warfare. |
| 10. Within Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 2.b. (5) you define the "ability to operate freely" as NATO interest. Can you give a definition of "operate freely"? Is it identically to the NATO term "freedom of movement"? | 10. It is freedom of movement without interference or threat. |

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| 11. The RFP describes a sequential approach for the optional period 1 and 2. Both phases are incremental improvements. Does the implementation need be in a sequential approach or can the development be done in e.g. 4 Week sprints with CI/CD? | 11. The periodicity is more an artefact of how funding works. The developmental schedule, as long as it meets the goal of a base and two more upgrades for the three periods, may be executed by the offeror using agile techniques as desired. |
| 12. Within Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 4.b (2) it's stated that "The proof of concept/demonstrator shall be available in a Software-as- a-Service (SaaS) paradigm, running at the contractor's facility". Is there a certain up/downtime/availability requirement for the service provision? | 12. 90% up for the first delivery, 95% for the second delivery and 97% for the third delivery. |
| 13. Regarding Annex A: Statement of Work (SOW) - 4.a: Is the conceptual model a generative created model, based on current data, or is it once manually defined during the initial setup? | 13. The conceptual model is the schema of an ontology or taxonomy set to describe the entities and concepts to adequately model the real world at a workable level of granularity. Various examples exist for these purposes. The upper level ontology describes the interdependencies of nodes (which may be an entity or concept) that form networks of purpose. It also addresses context. These networks allow the functioning of industries, regions, nations, and international organizations. A prototype ontology for this level exists and is being refined. It will be shared and likely updated as required. It is not intended to be prescriptive but ensure the solution provides the capability desired. |
| 14. With the recently published version 1 of questions and answers, we seem to be the third official requestor for an extension. NATO's proposed terms and conditions present a non-standard position for most organisations. Responder's will need to seek internal C-level approval to be able to continue. This process does take time, and an extension of three weeks would ensure that the many organisations required to go through this process are able to complete that process and present you with an option to consider. | 14. The RFP will be extend for one (1) week. Bids are due NLT 23 June 2023, 0900 hours, Eastern Standard Time, Norfolk, Virginia, USA. |

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| 15. Annex A "Statement of Work" Chapter 4 "Tasking and Deliverables" Heading c. "Data Sources" "The contractor shall arrange access for the proof of concept/demonstrator to ingest structured and unstructured data to include a minimum of: <br><br> (1) At least two social media feeds such as Twitter™, Instagram™, TikTok™, Telegraph™ or similar; <br> (2) At least two global news websites such as CNN™, BBC, or similar; <br> (3) Reference databases: <br> (a) Geospatial; Earth, Moon and Cislunar space, man-made features <br> (b) Geographic features, continents, terrain, ocean floor, bodies of water, etc. <br> (c) Political boundaries; Countries, state/provinces/oblasts, cities, towns, villages <br> (d) Ethnic and language locations <br> (e) Encyclopaedic; Janes, etc. <br> (f) Weather feed. <br> (g) Health status data from Centre for Disease Control (CDC) or others <br> (h) Text documents from file repositories" <br><br> Our clarification request goes towards further specifications as to the "arrange access" to the listed data sources (while we could make assumptions, we would want to validate from your requirements/expectations): <br><br> We would consider relevant further specifications – for each data-source - to be (rationale is to obtain your specific guidance/expectation to also provide best-value trade-off considering the prototype/demonstrator nature of the RFP and the costs associated with the Data Sources & envisioned growth of to-be stored data within the PM-ADM solution): <br><br> 1) Can you confirm the requirement for (near) real-time continuous streaming is applicable only for (1) | 15. <br> 1) Yes, social media and news sources are 24/7 monitored. <br><br> 2) For reference data sets, if an update (beyond administrative) is issued, then that should cause a refresh of the data. <br><br> 3) For volume, while the amount of data scanned will be substantial, comparatively, the amount retained will be much less. That is within the anticipate that knowledge graphs require a much higher level of data loaded before achieving a useful capability. |

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| and (2) sources (i.e., global social media feeds and global news sites). For Reference Data Sets - ad-hoc time-stamped datasets are accepted? Can you – if relevant and expected – indicate any required "regular refreshes" on the Reference Data Sets?<br><br>2) Is it allowed/expected, again for prototype/demonstration purposes, to include certain volume limitations on Data Sources being scanned and to be ingested/maintained/accumulate data (also over time, considering the full duration called for in the RFP)? | |
| 16. RFP Annex B - Scoring Criteria:<br><br>Should "strong recent experience is consistent across the majority of named experts" be taken literally? i.e. at least 50% of the team has strong recent experience in the given area? | 16. Yes. |
| 17. RFP Annex B - Scoring Criteria:<br><br>Please quantify 'a small number' with regards to "recent experience is clustered in small number of named experts." | 17. Less than 50% but greater than 20% of the named experts have recent experience. |
| 18. RFP Annex B - Scoring Criteria:<br><br>Approximately how large is the list of named individuals expected to be? | 18. It is left up to the company to determine the quantity and type of persons required to satisfy the requirements of the SOW. |
| 19. RFP Annex B - Scoring Criteria:<br><br>The "Conceptual Models" and "Data Models" criteria are composite, how will the number of years of experience be determined in the situation where there are different lengths of experience in each of the sub-criteria - will it be a simple mean average? | 19. Working in the area of data modelling for knowledge graphs suffices |

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| 20. RFP Annex B - Scoring Criteria:<br><br>The sub-criteria "sourcing and applying project and programme generic risk lists" within the "Data Models" criteria seems to be mismatched with the other sub-criteria in this category. Please elaborate on what is meant by this sub-criteria, is it experience of managing risks on projects and/or experience of taking such lists and using them within the context of AI data models and training data sets? | 20. It is experience of managing risks on projects, particularly data model design and implementation. |
| 21. RFP Section 2 (b):<br><br>Will the required NATO specific data for PM-ADM be accessible and will the appropriate data governance practices be in place? | 21. All data will be obtained from open sources by the offeror. |
| 22. RFP Enclosure 1:<br><br>Would any amendment of Clause 36 (Rights in Technical Data and Computer Software) be deemed a "Substantial change" for the purposes of the compliance statement in Enclosure 1? | 22. The bidder may offer variations in specific implementation and operational details provided that the functional and performance requirements are fully satisfied. Minor or non-substantial deviations may be accepted. Substantial changes shall be considered non-responsive. |
| 23. RFP Enclosure 1:<br><br>Given that there is no explicit clause relating to licensing of pre-existing software, can the Contractor assume that HQ SACT will accept standard commercial licence term? | 23. Bidder may offer commercial standard license terms that shall not constitute substantial changes to the HQ SACT Terms and Conditions. |
| 24. Even though it is a very good RFP document, I must admit the deadline for the Alliance industry to submit their RFP packages is rather difficult to achieve. I personally have been tracking this ACT initiative from the RFI stage, which was released backed in 2022. Usually an NOI is published before | 24. RFP Amendment 1 posted to extend for one (1) week. Bids are due NLT 23 June 2023, 0900 hours, Eastern Standard Time, Norfolk, Virginia, USA. |

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| an RFP call out, however – correct me if I am mistaken – there wasn't any NOI published for this particular RFP. It went from an RFI released back in 2022, to an RFP, which was published on 25 May 2023 with question and bid submission deadlines of 09 June and 16 June 2023 respectively resulting in challenges for industry in meeting the deadlines.<br><br>That being said, we would like to request a 2-week extension to RFP submission deadline for subject RFP, thereby allowing a new submission date of June 30th instead of 16 June 2023.<br><br>The rationale for this extension request is that the additional 2 weeks would allow industry interested in this opportunity to develop their proposal comprehensively more in detail in order to best meet the requirements of this complex opportunity.<br><br>We are cognisant that the deadline extension request is posted as one of the questions posed by the Alliance industry, to which ACT provided a negative response. However, we urge ACT to reconsider its decision on the request and approve the extension. Giving more time to the Alliance industry to submit their RFP packages will result in the submission of a higher-quality deliverable that closely aligns with ACT expectations. | |
| 25. I note the bid closing date is 16 Jun 23 and that it is clearly stated that 'No bids will be accepted after this time and date'.<br><br>This leaves a very short window of opportunity to prepare and submit a bid, particularly given that last weekend was a Public holiday in both US and Europe. Can you please clarify whether ACT will | 25. RFP Amendment 1 posted to extend for one (1) week. Bids are due NLT 23 June 2023, 0900 hours, Eastern Standard Time, Norfolk, Virginia, USA. |

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| consider a request to extend the bid closing date? | |
| 26. We are looking forward to working on this RFP and we would like to ask if there is any possibility to extend the deadline by a couple of weeks. | 26. RFP Amendment 1 posted to extend for one (1) week. Bids are due NLT 23 June 2023, 0900 hours, Eastern Standard Time, Norfolk, Virginia, USA. |
| 27. Should we process the data from visual social media sources such as Tiktok and Instagram as images, or within the scope of this proof of concept, would it be acceptable to extract and use text information such as captions and/or descriptions from these sources? | 27. We are interested in the data the content of image coveys, not the image itself (although a link to its URL should be included). If the data is relevant to a NATO interest, then it will be ingested and linked to pertinent data in the data store. |
| 28. Within the scope of the proof of concept, would it be sufficient to utilize resources solely in the English language, or should we employ resources in various languages? If the latter, in how many languages should we retrieve data? | 28. For the purposes of the proof of concept, English is sufficient. |
| 29. Would you please elaborate the statement "Relevant is defined as data accepted for ingestion has no more than six links before it links to a NATO interest." as expressed in Annex A. Section 5-a? Is there a specific significance or reason for the limit of six links? | 29. The number was chosen as a balance between the limits of a small proof of concept in terms of computing power and the amount of data that would be required to be ingested if the number was increased. We may need to adjust it as we go forward, based on the results achieved. |
| 30. RFP, enclosure 3, price table: the step "a. Conceptual Model IAW SOW para 4.a." Is scheduled on 15 September 2023. Is it rather 15 August 2023? | 30. No, 15 September is correct. The deliverables are listed in the order of the SOW vice chronologically. |
| 31. RFP, enclosure 3: "Collection of POC/Demonstrator strengths and weaknesses from developers plus initial feedback from beta test users and development of Base Version 0" the solution being developed by the contractor. Shall we ignore the first part of the sentence about the | 31. It was meant to collect input from both groups. Certainly, the developers will have ideas on what could be better and we acknowledge the value of that input. We add to that the user input to have a more holistic view of the capability from which to select and prioritize changes to the next version. |

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| developers? Or shall we understand that the collection of strengths and weaknesses from developers will be from the contractor's developers? | |
| 32. HQ SACT General Contract Terms and Conditions, Considering that the project is Software as a Service, do §36 (Rights in Technical Data and Computer Software) and §37 (Software Releases and Updates), apply to the project? We don't understand the notions of Research, Foundation and Sponsor. Can you clarify? | 32. Yes. Research is the development of the product under the contract awarded from this RFP. Foundation is the company awarded the contract from this RFP. Sponsor is HQ SACT and the divisions under its command. |
| 33. HQ SACT General Contract Terms and Conditions, §36: how can we declare our background IP? Do you get only the rights of use? | 33. Yes, generally the IP coupled with HQ SACT's funds used to create the product includes the HQ's use of the licence in perpetuity. |