

## QUESTION AND ANSWER (Q&A's) FOR REQUIREMENT

RFP or **IFIB**:

IFIB-ACT-SACT-23-53

Reference:

Questions # 1 - 10

Date of Issue:

19 July 2023

The following questions were raised with respect to the subject RFP/IFIB. Responses are to provide clarifications prior to receipt of offeror's proposal.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSE
<p><b>Q#1:</b> Information and details on past performance requested are sensitive and potentially classified, can you confirm that proposals can be protectively marked, appropriately restricted in their distribution, and that the address techproposal@act.nato.int is approved and able to receive such material or if an alternative submission route should be taken?</p>	<p>Bidders are required to submit their technical proposal to techproposal@act.nato.int and their price proposal to priceproposal@act.nato.int. There are a limited number of users with a "Need To Know" who has access to those two email accounts. HQ SACT does not provide a separate email for classified documentation in regards to past performance. Although this an Unclassified system, information sent/received via a NATO email account is secured as the NATO Network is a secured Network and not shared externally.</p>
<p><b>Q#2:</b> Given the sensitivity of our clients, what level of detail will need to be provided in our references of previous work and will all submissions be treated as classified?</p>	<p>Unfortunately, HQ SACT cannot provide a blanket response to this question. Each bidder is responsible to find the minimum level of detail that allows HQ SACT to evaluate the proposal. If the resulting description(s) require marking the information as classified or commercially sensitive, bidders shall redact/remove such information that is deemed non-sharable as it pertains to any past performance information.</p> <p>However, for responses that contain sensitive but not-classified information, the bidder's package shall be marked as "Commercial in Confidence", and shall be treated as such by HQ SACT.</p>

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<p>Q#3: Requirement 11.2 requires equivalent Facility Security Clearance (FSC) and an electronic mechanisms to facilitate classified information sharing between the supplier and HQ SACT within 2 weeks. Supplier is approved and has existing ability to electronically exchange classified documentation with UK NATO member state but understands that HQ SACT must provide a separate secure cloud platform to enable secure electronic communication with HQ SACT. Is provision of access to platform by HQ SACT if supplier is successful acceptable for 11.2 or must supplier already be working with HQ SACT and have the platform setup in advance to be eligible to bid for IFIB-ACT-SACT-23-53?</p>	<p>HQ SACT does not provide a secure cloud platform for the exchange of classified information. Bidders are expected to exchange classified information through NATO SECRET email accounts, which bidders shall access through organic means or by relaying through national authorities using in-place mechanisms. Example of frequently used national authorities include, but are not limited to government NATO SECRET account holders, national delegations, national MILREPS to NATO, NATO National technical Experts, National Acquisition Agencies, National Security Agencies, National Cyber Commands, BICES account holders, etc.</p> <p>In order to demonstrate the ability,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The bidding companies will need to send a NATO SECRET classified email with a classified (dummy) attachment to NATO SECRET email address <a href="mailto:alberto.domingo@ns.act.nato.int">alberto.domingo@ns.act.nato.int</a> and <a href="mailto:alberto.domingo@act.nato.int">alberto.domingo@act.nato.int</a> (SACT CAPDEV CAP CYBER Domingo A NIC) Email subject shall be "Email_test_IFIB-ACT-SACT-23-53_XXX", where XXX stands for the company name. You should send only dummy information to this email address to demonstrate the capability. No proposals information should be shared to this e-mail address. <b>This should take place between 27 July 2023 and 28 July 2023.</b></li> <li>2. ACT will reply to that that email with another NATO SECRET classified email, including an attachment that will contain a passphrase.</li> <li>3. Within 24 hours of ACT email reply submission, bidder shall reply and include the passphrase as the first line in the message body. Please note that the limit to 24 hours already account for and include provisions for email relay and security gateway delays, different time zones, etc."</li> </ol>
<p>Q#4: Does HQ SACT wish this engagement to consider both Cyber and EW or consider Cyber as a separate entity?</p>	<p>According to HQ SACT, Electronic Warfare (EW) is part of cyberspace.</p>

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<p><b>Q#5:</b> Ref. IFIB Annex A, Section 11. Security, subsection 11.2: The requirement as stated could give the appearance of restricting competition for contractors that do not meet the requirement in its entirety (i.e., to electronically receive, store, process and distribute documentation up to NATO SECRET). If a contractor meets the Facility Clearance Requirements, but does not possess a space for storing and processing classified information, will NATO provide access to workspace that meets this requirement? We have team members that currently have access to NATO facilities and hold the appropriate clearances.</p>	<p>In order to be able to do the work, the incumbent shall have (1) the ability to receive (via email from a NATO SECRET email account) classified documents; (2) the ability to process and store classified documents up to NATO SECRET, and; (3) The ability to send resulting classified documents to NATO SECRET email accounts. This means that the organization shall have organic classified means (networks) to store and process classified information, or regular (daily) access to (e.g., a governmental) one, plus the necessary gateway mechanism that allow electronic exchange of information between the network used by the incumbent and the NATO secret one. HQ SCAT shall not provide any of those means to the bidders.</p> <p>Also see response to question #3.</p>
<p><b>Q#6:</b> Ref. IFIB Annex B, Table 1, Compliance Matrix: Bidder's Company, Item 6: For a company that has team members with current NATO SECRET clearances but not active email accounts, will NATO ACT create an account prior to award to test email exchange capabilities?</p>	<p>HQ SACT will not provide any classified nor unclassified networks or email accounts. The incumbent is expected to have access to a classified (up to NATO SECRET) network and email accounts, as organic means or through access to national resources. The network employ by the bidders' team shall support email exchange with NATO SECRET (e.g., via BICES, national gateways, etc.) so classified email exchange and document sharing can take place between the bidders team and HQ SACT project members.</p> <p>Also see response to question #1 &amp; #3.</p>
<p><b>Q#7:</b> Ref. IFIB Annex B, Table 2, Compliance Matrix: SMEs, Item 2: Would NATO ACT consider eliminating the requirement for each SME to meet two areas of experience to enable an organization to use an approach which would potentially capitalize on an expanded pool of available experts with deep, specific expertise?</p>	<p>HQ SACT will not eliminate the requirement. Table 2 shall only be filled for SMEs that will spend more than 20% of their workload on the project. It is unlikely that 20% of the effort or more will have to be spent in any one discipline. In principle, therefore, the SME should not be listed in table 2. Alternatively, bidder can list the SME indicating his/her non-compliance in row 2. A footnote explaining the non-compliance and the reason why the person is still in the list of SMEs (e.g., being the only person with that expertise in the company) would support the evaluation team.</p>

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<p><b>Q #8:</b>          Could NATO please clarify the pricing requirements for this solicitation?. As this is a fixed price deliverable contract, it's our assumption we are just providing a fixed price per milestone, by year as suggested by the chart provide on page 11 and 12 of the RFP. The RFP however states on page 10 states " The categories below are representative of skills required to provide deliverables at each level and proposed rates will be used to support the Basis of Estimate" and Page 22 states " The rate for surge effort shall not exceed the base/option year rate."</p> <p>1.) Does NATO want to see a list of labor categories and fully burdened rates that make up the fixed price we are proposing for each deliverable?</p> <p>2.) If so, Can NATO please clarify that we will invoice on a milestone basis based on completion of the work and any references to hours and rates will be removed from the resulting award.</p> <p>3.) Where is the contractor to provide pricing within its response to address "Surge effort"</p>	<p>This is a firm fixed price deliverable-based contract. Bidder shall price the cost corresponding to base year, plus the cost for each option period/year. In order to estimate the cost/price, ACT has provided references/guidelines in terms of type of activities to be conducted, type of products to be developed, and approximate level of effort (in person years) that ACT estimates would be required to conduct the jobs, based on the assumption that the company has experts with prior knowledge for the relevant topics.</p> <p>We do require a list of personnel that is anticipated to perform work under this contract and their resumes to prove they possess the experience required to complete the work as a whole. However, HQ SACT will not evaluate each individual or rate them from the scoring matrix. Each bidder will be evaluated based on their technical approach and the number of provided personnel/experience possessed to perform the work. The decision for this award will be based on the company that provides the best value (Reference Annex B).</p>
<p><b>Q #9:</b>          Does the base year of performance, which is only four months from September 1 to December 31, 2023, is it expected to require the same level of effort as an entire option year, or is the expectation that the base year will involve one iteration (e.g., one topic or issue) of knowledge transfer. The table on Pages 11 and 12 of the RFP makes each year look the same, including the base year. The RFP also talks about there being roughly a 15 week cycle for each issue posed. Can you clarify how to cost out the base year versus the option years?</p>	<p>The length of the base period will be determined by the contractual activities and the availability of a purchase order in place. The base period shall be conducted as any other period/option, but since it will be much shorter in time, only the proportional part of effort, person-hours, activities and products will be employed/developed. Costing of the base period should, then, be about 4/12 the cost of the option years (minus escalations), assuming a contract start date of 1 September 2023.</p> <p>Please see sections 6.5 and 7.3 of Annex A.</p>
<p><b>Q #10:</b>          Per the RFP travel (and related expenses) will not be covered under this contract, can you provide detail on how costs will be reimbursed for the in person kickoff meeting? How are they handled separately in accordance with the ACT Financial Manual?</p>	<p>Travel shall be approved on a case-by-case basis by HQ SACT and will be coordinated accordingly. The procedures for project/contractor travel authorization shall be completed prior to start of travel. Travel and travel expenses shall be billed as a separate line item and may be reimbursed by HQ SACT.</p> <p>Please see ACT Financial Manual by accessing this link:  <a href="https://www.act.nato.int/opportunities/contracting/">https://www.act.nato.int/opportunities/contracting/</a></p> <p>Under Contractor information you will find additional reference links to the ACT Financial Manual.</p>